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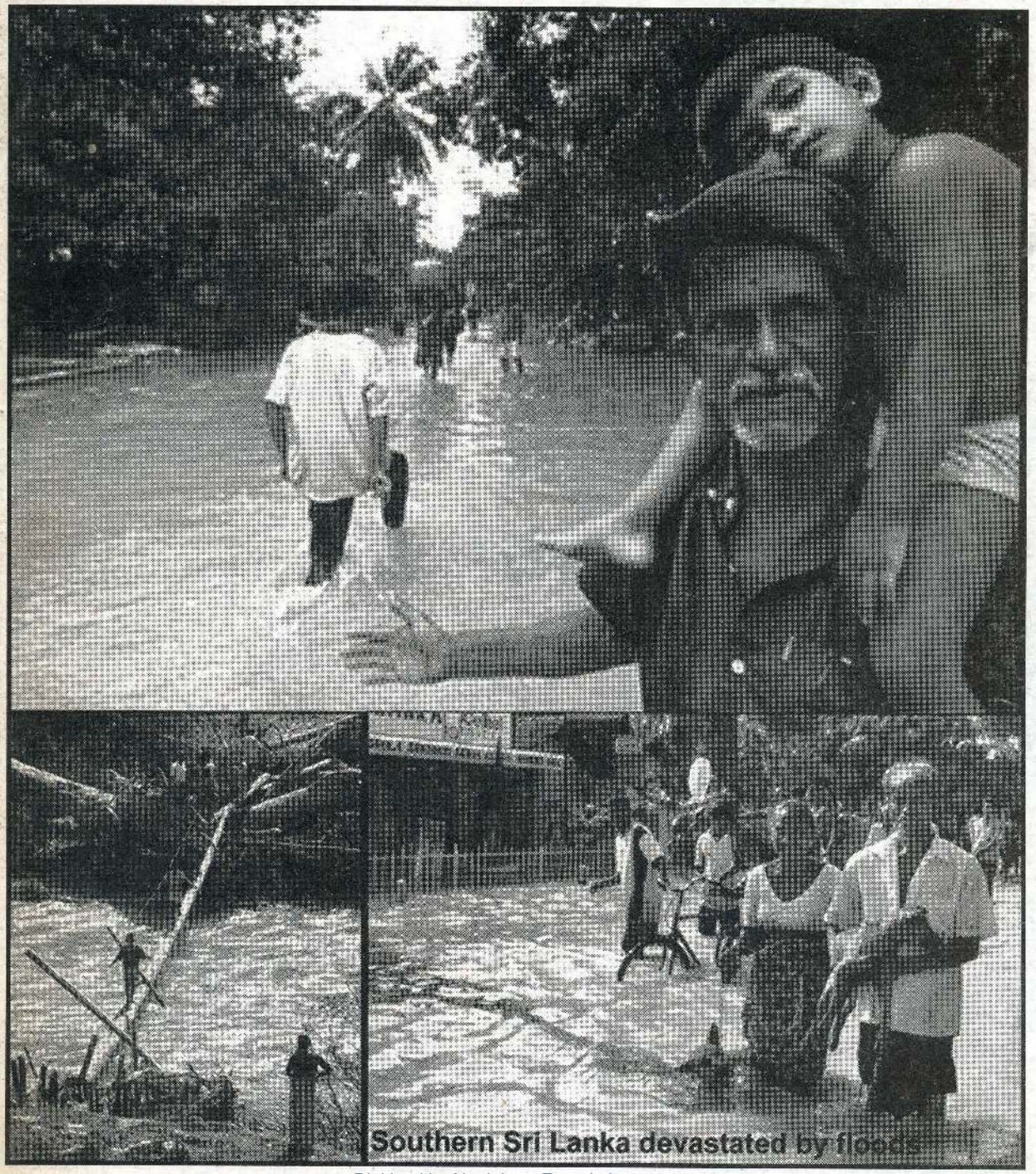

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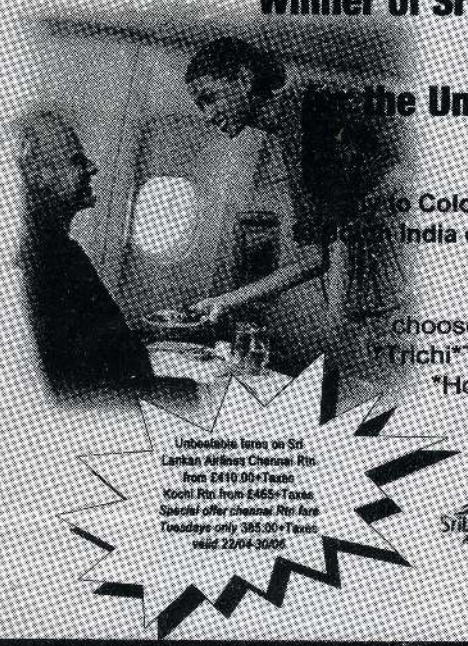

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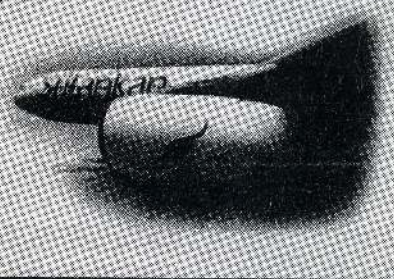

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-Voltaire

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LTTE & Tokyo Conference	03
LTTE conditions for talks	04
News in Focus	06
Repeating past errors	10
Interim administration - Questionable in law	12
When Constitutions become a mere lottery	14
PM urges LTTE for talks	15
Self determination and conflict regulation	17
Peace and human rights	24
News Track	26
Classified	38

LTTE and the Tokyo Conference

There is a serious question mark about the LTTE's participation in the forthcoming 'Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka' of donor countries to be held on 9-10 June. Having suspended participation in peace talks with the Government last month, the LTTE has now resuscitated its previous demand that an interim administrative structure with powers of "decision making and delivery of the tasks of rebuilding the war-damaged economy and restoring normalcy in the Tamil speaking homeland." The LTTE leadership demands that the Government should agree to setting up such a structure, mainly under its control, as a precondition for its participation in the Conference.

It will be recalled the LTTE made a similar demand before and dropped it during the second round of peace talks having recognized the constitutional and legal impediments that the Government faced in setting up such an institution. It is true that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe himself expressed the prospect of an interim administration headed by the LTTE during the election campaign of December 2001. However, the fact is at that election, he managed to secure only a narrow majority of seats in parliament and assumed office having cobbled together a coalition with an assortment of minority parties. Establishing an interim administration would require constitutional amendment which the government cannot carry through at this time as it lacks the requisite two-third majority in Parliament. Whatever may be the imperfections of the political processes and the Constitution itself in Sri Lanka, it must be recognized that the elected Government must operate within the constraints of the law, and whatever it does beyond those constraints is judicially challengeable. The Government's political opponents and those opposed to the peace process are waiting ever watchful of every move to see whether the Prime Minister is overstepping his constitutional limits. In this context it is doubtful whether he or his Government can satisfy the demand of the LTTE on the issue of setting up an interim administration outside the framework of the Constitution.

The Norwegian facilitators, including its Foreign and Deputy Foreign Ministers and the Japanese Special Envoy Jasushi Akashi have made strenuous efforts over a number days traveling between Colombo and the Wanni having meetings after meetings with Government and LTTE leaders with a view to finding a formula agreeable to both parties which would enable the LTTE to make its decision to take part in the Tokyo Conference. But so far their valiant efforts have proved unsuccessful.

Over sixty countries are expected to attend and participate at the Conference and it is now certain that it will take place with or without LTTE participation. Thanks to the laborious efforts by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the UN System, the preparations for the Tokyo Conference have already reached the final stage. The Conference is intended to provide an unprecedented and unique opportunity, in which the international community would express its unified and strong commitment to reconstruction and development of the entirety of Sri Lanka, particularly of the war-torn North and East. The sponsors have made the point that that the Tokyo conference would constitute an important platform for the demonstration of the international community's strong support for the peace process in Sri Lanka. That so many countries and international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank are attending the conference reflects the global nature of the close interest and positive support that the peace process in Sri Lanka has attracted.

The opportunity of this unique Conference should be grasped to mobilize as much financial support as possible for the benefit of the people, especially of those from the war-ravaged areas in the Northeast of the island. Many countries have requested the LTTE to reconsider its decision to boycott the Conference drawing attention to two salient points. Firstly, its absence will be perceived by the international community as an indication of its lack of commitment to the peace process. Secondly, it will also be perceived as not acting in the best interest of the people it seeks to represent, as the primary aim of this Conference is to aid the reconstruction and redevelopment of the Northeast of the island.

The country has been devastated by the unprecedented natural disaster in recent weeks. Massive floods have affected the greater part of the south of the island resulting in the death and disappearance of hundreds, destruction of tens of thousands of properties and displacement of several hundred thousand people. The peace process in which the people have invested so much hope has reached a crisis point. In this context it is tragic to see the offices of the Presidency and the Prime Minister engaging in the comedy of a self-induced constitutional crisis over the issue of the National Lotteries Board. The people expect that both the incumbents would respect their respective constitutional positions and seek to work together in the national interest.

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LTTE sets conditions for Peace talks

The setting up of an "interim administrative structure" under LTTE control with powers of "decision making and delivery of the tasks of rebuilding the war-damaged economy and restoring normalcy in the Tamil speaking homeland" has been put forward as a precondition for the Tamil Tigers to resume peace talks with the Government. "A positive and constructive response from the Prime Minister setting out his ideas and proposals in clear and concrete terms will certainly help our leadership to take a crucial decision on the resumption of peace talks and participation at the donor conference in Japan," LTTE's chief negotiator Anton Balasingham stated in his letter dated 20 May to Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen.

The following is the full text of Mr. Balasingham's letter:

"In accordance with the decision of the LTTE leadership I am advised to respond to a set of proposals submitted by you in connection with the request made by our leader, Mr Vellupillai Pirapaharan, to establish an interim administrative structure with adequate powers to undertake Northeastern reconstruction and development activities.

Your proposals are out-lined in three documents: a Draft Agreement (between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), an informal paper on 'Elements of a Strengthened and Expanded Mechanism for Reconstruction and Development of the North and East', and finally, a letter suggesting the use of locally elected bodies as a basis for development activities. We have given considerable thought and reflection to your proposals. Before presenting our critical review of the contents of your proposals, I wish to clarify as to why the LTTE leadership was compelled to suggest the formation of an effective interim administrative structure for the Northeast at this stage.

Originally the idea of an interim administrative structure for the Northeast was mooted by the LTTE months before the last general elections. The UNP leadership endorsed the proposal and the Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe openly campaigned in support of an interim administrative structure with the active participation of the LTTE. As you are aware, the issue of interim administration was taken up for discussion at the inaugural session of the peace talks in Sattahip, Thailand. Responding to the proposal of the LTTE delegation, Prof. Pieris explained the legal and constitutional constraints involved in the formation of such an administrative body outside the parameters of the Sri Lanka Constitution. To avoid political controversy in the early stages of the talks, the negotiating parties decided to replace the idea of an administrative structure with the establishment of a 'Joint Task Force for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Activities' for the Northeast. At the second session of peace talks, the negotiating teams agreed to transform the 'Joint Task Force' into a Sub-committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (SIHRN). The role of this sub-committee was to identify humanitarian and reconstruction needs of the Northeast population and prioritise implementation of activities to meet these needs. The committee would give primacy 'to activities aimed at rehabilitation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and to humanitarian mine action programmes and other activities supporting the return of IDPs to their original homes such as reconstruction of roads, production infrastructure, health facilities, schools and similar issues.'

You will appreciate that SIHRN was instituted on the basis of equal and joint partnership with the primary objective of restoring normalcy to the lives of Tamil people affected by prolonged war and to facilitate the speedy and unhindered return of the IDPs and refugees to their own homes and villages. The resettlement and rehabilitation of hundreds of thousands of uprooted persons is of paramount importance in addressing the urgent existential problems of the Tamil speaking population of the Northeast. SIRHN was established to undertake this immense humanitarian task. Unfortunately SIRHN failed to function effectively and no progress has been made towards alleviating the hardships and suffering of the displaced population. Despite the goodwill and the fullest cooperation of the LTTE, SIHRN has not been able to deliver on the expectations of the people. This lack of performance and the failure to produce tangible results on urgent humanitarian issues has eroded all confidence of the Tamil people in SIHRN, the only single institution that was created through lengthy sessions of dialogue.

It was under these frustrating circumstances that Mr. Pirapaharan, during his discussions with your Foreign Minister Mr. Petersen, suggested a new innovative structure for the Northeast with adequate authority and legal status for the rapid implementation of humanitarian and development activities. This innovative new structure, in his view, should be efficient, transparent and accountable with definite functions and powers so that the peace dividends pledged to the people can be delivered to the people without delay, without corruption, without bureaucratic obstacles. The LTTE leadership is of the view that a permanent political settlement to the Tamil national question can only be actualised in a supreme constitution instituting a radically new polity, an endeavour that can-

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not be realised under the current unstable political climate. Since a permanent political settlement is not feasible in the immediate future, the Tiger leadership proposes an interim administrative structure with greater participation of the LTTE, in both decision making and delivery of the tasks of rebuilding the war-damaged economy and restoring normalcy in the Tamil speaking homeland. In this context, we wish to point out that the Government of India proposed an interim administrative mechanism following the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987, providing the LTTE with a dominant participatory role. Mr. Pirapaharan envisages that the proposed interim administrative mechanism should supersede the multiplicity of existing structures, which work at cross-purposes and impede the efficient utilisation of development funds.

Finally, in view of the upcoming donors conference in Japan, the LTTE leadership is of the view that an efficient, radically new administrative mechanism should be instituted immediately, without delay, with wide powers to expedite the resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction works in the Northeast. We are of the view that SIRHN, with its limited functions and powers, cannot undertake such monumental tasks.

Now let us scrutinize critically the set of ideas and proposals outlined in your communications addressed to the Vanni leadership and to me in London. The two-paged Draft Agreement, worked out by you with the consultation of the Government of Sri Lanka, was submitted to Mr. Thamilselvan on Saturday 17 May 2003. Constructed as a joint agreement between the GOSL and the LTTE, your draft briefly mentions the proposed North East Development and Reconstruction Council (DRC) as an expanded version of SIRHN. The functions, powers and mechanism of the proposed structure, according to your draft, have to be established through negotiations between the parties 'following consultations with the donor community at the Tokyo donor conference.' The DRC is not presented as a concrete proposal but as a notion or rather as a concept that has to be worked out into a framework subjected to the 'guidance' and endorsement of the international community. This draft on the DRC falls short of Mr. Pirapaharan's expectations of a concrete framework for an interim administrative set-up. Instead the draft paper attempts to situate the DRC within an overall package of binding commitments to various issues including an abstractly formulated 'road map' of an envisaged federal solution.

The other brief draft paper entitled 'Elements of a Strengthened and Expanded Mechanism for Reconstruction and Development of the North and East' is an interesting document with some detailed input into the structure of the 'Development and Reconstruction Council' DRC). This draft offers an expanded mechanism of SIHRN transforming it into a three-layered structure consisting of a policy board, project committee and an administrative body, deriving its sole authority from the Prime Minister' office. The draft suggests that the LTTE can enjoy equal representation at the decision-making bodies (in the policy board and project committee) but 'he administration should primarily employ Tamils living in the North and East.' This means the LTTE's political representatives cannot play any role in the administrative structure. Essentially the document is brief and fails to provide clear definitions of the powers and functions of the decision making bodies and the question of the legal status of the DRC is not properly defined, but eventually subjected to legislation by Parliament. Finally, and most importantly, the donor community is given the final determination over the establishment of the DRC. We do not know whether this draft is your own formulation or a set of proposals worked out by the government. The Colombo media has already given wide publicity to the proposal claiming that the government has decided to set-up a 'central co-ordinating mechanism' with wide powers to implement reconstruction and rehabilitation works. Though the proposals have new elements they have limitations in addressing the central proposal made by the LTTE leader calling for the establishment of an effective interim administrative structure for the Northeast with significant participation of the LTTE. Finally, your letter suggests a model of utilizing locally elected bodies (local government institutions) as a means to 'run development and reconstruction related affairs of the Northeast.' While I appreciate your innovative initiatives, I should say that the powers and functions vested with the local government bodies are extremely limited and confined only to particular subjects and therefore cannot be an effective administrative mechanism to undertake the immense tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Furthermore, we will be ridiculed by the Tamil masses for having fought a liberation war for political independence and statehood and finally ending up with village committees devoid of any authority.

While expressing our gratitude for your indefatigable endeavour in seeking solutions to break through the current impasse in the peace process we kindly request you to urge the Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe to officially respond to our leader Mr. Pirapaharan's proposals for an interim administrative set-up. A positive and constructive response from the Prime Minister setting out his ideas and proposals in clear and concrete terms will certainly help our leadership to take a crucial decision on the resumption of peace talks and participation at the donor conference in Japan." ❐

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Japan urges LTTE participation

May 24 - The Japanese Government has urged the LTTE to make its utmost efforts to reach an acceptable agreement with the Sri Lankan Government urgently before the Tokyo Donor conference with a view to resolving other remaining issues later.

In a press release issued yesterday the Japanese Government said that with the fresh momentum generated at the Tokyo Conference other issued can be resolved later.

The release said that the Japanese Government was of the view that the Tokyo Donor Conference should be held as scheduled.

The Government of Japan, as the host country and one of the co-chairs of the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka scheduled on June 9,10 is concerned over the recent developments regarding the LTTE's participation in the Tokyo Conference, especially the latest stance reported to have been expressed by the LTTE at the press conference held on May 22.

The Tokyo Conference is intended to provide an unprecedented and unique opportunity, in which international community would express its unified and strong commitment to reconstruction and development of the entirety of Sri Lanka, particularly of the war-torn North and East.

Thanks to the laborious efforts by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the UN System, the preparations for the Tokyo Conference have already reached the final stage.

In the light of these circumstances as well as the acute needs of assistance to Sri Lanka, especially to the people in the war-torn areas of the North and East, the Government of Japan is of the view that the Tokyo Conference should be held as scheduled. If the Conference were not held as scheduled, it may mean an irreparable loss to the long suffering people of Sri Lanka.

The Government of Japan, therefore, urges the LTTE to make its utmost efforts to reach an acceptable agreement urgently with the Government of Sri Lanka on some of the outstanding issues before the Tokyo Conference with a view to resolving other remaining issues later with fresh momentum generated at the Tokyo Conference, the release said.

US on peace process

May 13 - The Assistant Secretary of State in the US government Ms Christina Rocca held discussions with President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge regarding the stalled peace talks between the GOSL and the LTTE. During the discussion President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge is reported to have told the US diplomat that peace talks should be taken forward by resolving the issues between government and LTTE through negotiations.

Sri Lankan President had expressed satisfaction over the stand taken by the US government on the issue of the ban on the LTTE, presidential secretariat sources said. The US government's position is that it would consider lifting the ban if the LTTE renounced terrorism and the concept of a separate state.

On the previous day Ms Christina Rocca met Prime Minister Mr.Ranil Wickremasinghe and discussed in detail the future approach of the peace talks in view of the stand taken by the LTTE to suspend its participation until decisions arrived at six-rounds of talks held earlier are implemented.

Addressing a press conference at the end of her two day visit to Sri Lanka before leaving the island, Ms Christina Rocca said that the aid summit conference scheduled to be held in Japan next month would benefit the Tigers, Tamils and the peace process.

She said that the US would link international aid for Sri Lanka to observing human rights and respect for democracy while renewing a demand that Tamil Tiger rebels give up violence. Rocca expected conditions to be attached to the foreign aid to be pledged next month for Sri Lanka at a donor conference in Japan.

"I think that there will be certain benchmarks or certain steps that we would like to see accomplished as we move forward with reconstruction. I think adherence to basic democracy and human rights will probably be one of them. But I will leave the details of this to the conference in Tokyo."

Asked about the several ceasefire violations, with the United States accusing the Tigers of resorting to assassinations, abductions, child recruitment and extortion, she said, "Let me just say that we are aware of these breaches in the ceasefire on the part of the LTTE. In order for that situation to change, we call upon them to renounce violence, renounce all these activities, reject separatism, and honour democracy and human rights."

She repeated her call for cohabitation between the President and Prime Minister. Ms Rocca said that she was worried about the possibility that cohabitation quarrels will eclipse peace talk deliberations. Rocca said, "I have spoken with figures both within and beyond the government regarding a broad range of issues, including cohabitation. In each visit, I have shared the international community's fervent hope that these quarrels be set aside so that a clear, consistent, and united Sri Lankan voice be heard at Tokyo." "The present peace process has provided a tremendous boost to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict of two decades," said Ms Christina Rocca.

Armitage to attend Tokyo Conference: May 24 - United States Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage has confirmed his participation at the Tokyo donor conference next month. Armitage says that the conference is important for the international community to demonstrate its solid support for the peace process and its full commitment to contribute to the reconstruction and development of all regions in the county including the North and the East. The US Deputy Secretary is expected to discuss reconstruction and rehabilitation assistance to Sri Lanka at the conference.

NEWS IN FOCUS

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The United States believes that the Tokyo conference should be held as scheduled notwithstanding the LTTE's stated position not to participate. The US agrees with the government of Japan that if the conference were not held as scheduled it would mean an irreparable loss to the long suffering people of Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, it has been reported that India has indicated that it would not attend the Tokyo meeting if the LTTE participates in it.

Enlist Opposition Support - NPC

May 23 – "The National Peace Council welcomes the LTTE's expression of willingness to resume the negotiation processs and participate in the Tokyo donor conference next month if it receives a favourable response from the government. The formal request made to the Norwegian facilitators for the establishment of an interim administration for the North East is an indication by the LTTE of a way out of the present deadlock in the peace process," The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (NPC) stated in statement today.

The NPC's statement added, "As requested by the LTTE, it is important that the government should find a way to establish a legally-based administrative system for the North East that would recognise the equal participation of the LTTE. We note that the history of governmental efforts to resolve the ethnic conflict in the past have foundered on unfulfilled promises and agreements that were not underpinned by an appropriate legal foundation.

"The NPC believes that the North East interim administrative council should comprise the LTTE on the one hand, and the government, major opposition party and other parties on the other hand. This would reflect the plural nature of society and give all parties a stake in governance and responsibility. Relief, reconstruction and development work should take place with the inclusive participation of the representatives of the ethnic communities inhabiting the north and east. The interim administration should function according to agreed and enforceable principles of transparency, accountability and human rights. "We urge that whatever course of action the government finally decides to take in its response to the LTTE, its approach must be one that includes the LTTE in an equal partnership together with a policy of bipartisanship between the government and major opposition party. We recognise that it was the government and LTTE's consensual approach up to now that enabled the sustainability and success of the peace process.

"There is now a further need to enlist the support of the opposition in taking the peace process forward. The creation of an interim administration, as demanded by the LTTE, would require constitutional amendment for which opposition support is indispensable. Therefore, if a sustainable peace process is the goal, then it is imperative that the consensual approach should be regained and strengthened as the first priority."

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PA rejects demand for interim administration

May 24 - The People's Alliance totally rejected the LTTE demand for an interim administration outside the Sri Lankan constitution and warned the Prime Minister that acceding to this demand would put the Government in peril.

"The Prime Minister cannot act illegally or unconstitutionally. If he does so, we will also have to take constitutional remedies," PA Media spokesman Dr.Sarath Amunugama told the PA weekly media briefing on 24 May

He said "the LTTE Political Chief Thamilselvam on Thursday submitted a very strong demand to the Prime Minister as a pre-condition of their participation in the Tokyo conference that the Premier should give him in writing that he (Prime Minister) will establish an interim administration with powers which will be defined in that letter and will be outside the constitution of Sri Lanka."

"As far as all politicians in this country are concerned, we have taken an oath of allegiance to safeguard the Constitution of Sri Lanka. Ranil Wickremesinghe has also taken oaths on three occasions, once as a member of Parliament, once as a Minister and once as the Prime Minister. He has taken a solemn oath that he will not act contrary to the constitution of Sri Lanka," he said.

This is the basic law of this country. Therefore the Prime Minister cannot agree to any agreement outside the constitution of Sri Lanka. It is indeed very ironic that this very constitution was established by late President J.R.Jayawardene and was fully supported by Ranil Wickremesinghe. So he cannot act outside that constitution, he said.

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Amunugama said it is very funny that the Prime Minister who was quibbling about consultation quoting section 44 about the President consulting him about the Development Lottery is now being asked to give away the North and East without any consultation with the President at all.

Under the 13th Amendment, devolution of power has been effected by the Parliament of Sri Lanka. According to a Supreme Court judgement, devolution of power under the 13th amendment was possible with a two third majority and does not need a referendum. This is the law as it stands in this country, he said.

He said: "there is no way that the Prime Minister can change this law without coming to Parliament and going through the normal constitutional procedures for any change. That is simply impossible. He simply does not have the power to go into the areas of further devolution because that will require legislative sanctions through Parliament and certification by the President."

Those are legal options that are available. So there is no way that the Prime Minister can give letters to the LTTE regarding actions either within or outside the constitution. Therefore if he gives such a letter, it will be an outright challenge to the constitution and the Parliament of Sri Lanka and also a violation of oaths that the Premier has taken thrice, Amunugama said. He said if the LTTE is ready for a federal structure, why are they talking of being outside the constitution.

US Envoy on chances of Peace

May 9 - US Ambassador Ashley Wills said the cohabitation between the government and the main opposition was not going very well. "In fact it surprises me that these two parties are not getting along better when so much is at stake. Imagine how important it would be if the LTTE looked across the negotiating table and saw the two major political parties were united. What a formidable negotiating partner that would be. Right now that's not so. It's very troubling", he told the 11th Annual General Meeting of the Hotel Catering and Management Association (HCIMA) Sri Lanka International Group.

The remarks were made as the government and President Chandrika Kumaratunga clashed over the latter's decision to take over the Development Lotteries Board.

Wills said that he was reaching the end of his three-year period as a guest in Sri Lanka and observed that he had come to appreciate that the present peace talks were the most serious attempt made in the last 20 years.

"There are too many things that could go wrong in the peace process. Perhaps the biggest variable is the LTTE. Does it really mean it? Can it be trusted? Is it really going to give up its military identity and transform into a political Organisation and take part in this country's democracy?" he asked.

"I don't know the answer to that. The LTTE has made some encouraging statements but it has not lived up to all its words so we are still dubious," he told the representatives of the hotel industry at the Holiday Inn Hotel.

He said that he had resisted saying that he was optimistic. "For me being optimistic means that there is more than 50 per cent chance of success. And I don't think we are quite at a stage yet where there is a 50 per cent chance of success or better", the ambassador said.

Things had gone pretty well in the last 15 months. The cease-fire had held. It was an imperfect cease-fire. There had been violations on both sides. More frankly on the LTTE side than on the government side although the LTTE recently had suspended its participation alleging that the government of Sri Lanka had not lived up to its side of the particular bargain.

"I know that was quite unfair as the government is trying hard to abide by its obligations but it hasn't been able to meet all of them. But it has done pretty well. We acknowledge the imperfections but the cease-fire is a good thing for Sri Lanka" Mr. Wills said.

The cease-fire had held although it had been imperfect. The entire attempt was quite fragile. As an American guest in Sri Lanka, he was reluctant to express his estimation of the prospects because it really wasn't a process that the US controlled. It was something that Sri Lankans with the help of the Norwegians controlled, he said.

"There is a real chance of success. The cor-relation of forces, as the Soviets used to say, is as favourable as it ever has been. Internationally terrorism was never cool but now it is as uncool as it ever has been. I think the LTTE will be reluctant, and it should be reluctant, to the use of terror. So there are a lot or factors in Sri Lanka's favour. Overall there is a chance", the ambassador said.

He said that it was the duty of all Sri Lankans to help create circumstances to make a lasting peace possible. "If it comes all of you here will prosper. I will be delighted to see you prosper and the US will be thrilled to see this country rich. It should have been rich already. It has missed an opportunity because of this divisive ethnic problem and it had not been sorted out yet", he said.

Urging all Sri Lankans to become active in the pursuit for peace, he said, "Do what you can as members of this organisation, as members of the trade chambers, members of the major political parties or as common citizens to express your support in anyway you can for this attempt at peace."

Bail refused for arms smuggling suspects

May 23 - Courts in Thailand have refused bail to three alleged LTTE suspects arrested and detained on 12 May with a haul of arms, ammunition and communication gear, after police objected to their release on instructions of the Thai government.

The men were arrested in a pick-up truck at the Royal Princess hotel car park in Ranong's Muang district, some 570 kilometres (353 miles) south of Bangkok, with police seizing ten nine-mm pistols, three 11-mm pistols and 45,000 rounds of ammunition, according to a local police officer. Police also seized five mobile phones, one of them programmed for contact via satellite. "These weapons are very modern, for special use by Swat teams," Col Somchai said following the arrest.

Police said the weapons came from Bangkok to Ranong

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for a shipment out of the country. "The three suspects have been on a list of suspected war weapon exporters for a long time. They belong to the group which smuggles weapons to the separatists in Tamil Eelam," a police intelligence source in Bangkok told journalists, referring to the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka. The intelligence source said the smuggling ring was known to have conducted several gun-running operations from Thailand but police had little concrete information to work with until now.

The three, identified by Thai media as Aseervatham Sathyapavan, 34, from Jaffna, Thevarajah Sasijaran, 29 from Nadunkaney, and Gunapala Sugith, 27, from Chempiyanpathu, were charged with weapons possession and carrying concealed weapons in public, Ranong police added. Aseervatham Sathyapavan has reportedly lived in Thailand for at least ten years and speaks fluent Thai.

Muang district police chief Somchai Uamthanom said the suspects had been interrogated by officers from several agencies. They admitted obtaining the weapons on behalf of the LTTE but refused to reveal the source. The embassy of Sri Lanka had been asked to send officials to join the investigation.

Meanwhile, reports from Bangkok say that one of the suspects - Thevarajah Sasiharan - had even been with the LTTE delegation to February peace talks in Berlin, "The Island" reported from Colombo.

"They have been denied bail," said Deputy Superintendent Surm Sak of Ranong Police, when contacted by telephone yesterday. "The investigation is not over yet and we are keeping them in our police lockup. These arrests are important because of the good relationship between Sri Lanka and Thailand."

"We will continue investigations. It is our duty to prevent illegal weapons going out of our country to any other nation," Sak stressed. Official sources in Bangkok said the Thai foreign ministry had formally requested police in the southern city of Ranong to object to bail.

In a written communiqué E9, the Thai foreign ministry emphasised that releasing the three suspects would encourage further activities detrimental to Sri Lanka's peace process, official sources in Bangkok told The Island. Accordingly, police objected to a request for bail made by lawyers hired by the LTTE.

The sources said the Sri Lankan embassy in Bangkok - which has now been asked to join police investigations - has fully endorsed the Thai government's view and had supported the rejection of bail.

Asirwatham Sahayapavan, 34, from Jaffna, Thevarajah Sasiharan, 29, from Nedunkerny and Gunapala Sugiv, 27, from Chempiyanpur were arrested last week in a Japanese pick-up truck at the Royal Princess Hotel car park in Ranong's Muang district. The truck had been laden with an inventory of arms, ammunition and communication gear.

Inspector Sak, who is working under Muang district police chief Somchai Uamthanom, said the weapons were now being checked for serial numbers. The items being scrutinised are ten 9mm Glock pistols, three 11mm HK Mark 23 pistols and 45,000 rounds of assorted ammunition. Police also seized five mobile phones, one of them programmed for contact via satellite. The report of the investigators will enable Thai police to cover more ground and perhaps make more arrests.

Somchai has confirmed to the Bangkok Post that the three men were LTTE operatives. Sathayapavan has reportedly lived in Thailand for at least ten years and speaks fluent Thai.

Thailand, which is the main host for negotiations between the government and Tigers, has long been regarded a safe haven for free-spending weapons purchasers of the LTTE.

"The Tigers are now in a dilemma over whether to publicly defend their operatives or to disown them, and claim that they were private operatives," an official source in Bangkok said. The arrests came at a crucial juncture in the peace process, during a time when the world is waging a collaborated campaign against terrorism.

Aid only under stringent conditions

May 10 - A European parliamentarian urged international donors to Sri Lanka to attach "stringent conditions" in a bid to strengthen the island's foundering peace process. Irish MEP John Cushnahan also said Tamil Tigers should end their boycott of peace talks and attend next month's donor conference hosted by Japan and co-chaired by the European Union.

He said it would be a "tactical blunder" by the LTTE if they failed to show up at the Tokyo aid pledging conference on June 9-10. "Some in the international community might interpret this as proof of a lack of genuine commitment to the peace process," Cushnahan said. "Personally speaking, I believe such a view would be misplaced."

Cushnahan, however, said foreign aid to Sri Lanka should be conditional and aimed at strengthening the Norwegian-backed peace effort that seeks to end three decades of ethnic bloodshed that has claimed over 60,000 lives. "I think it is important that the international community attach stringent conditions to the disbursement of funds. These funds should be provided on the strict understanding that the peace process is implemented fully in spirit and letter," he said.

The LTTE suspended their participation in talks on April 21 after accusing the government of failing to deliver on promises made during six previous rounds of direct face-to-face negotiations since September.

"I recognise the legitimacy of some of their grievances. But, I would also like to say to the LTTE directly that a peace process has not been fully implemented when abduction, recruitment of children, the targeted killings of political opponents and extortion continue," Cushnahan said.

Cushnahan, who has monitored two elections in Sri Lanka in recent years, said it was important for the island's main political parties to take a common position on the ethnic conflict to ensure the success of the peace process. "It is important they speak with a common voice on this," he said, though he declined to comment on the latest cohabitation crisis between President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. ❐

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Danger of Repeating Previous Errors

Dr. Jehan Perera

The LTTE's participation in the Tokyo donor conference still remains in doubt. Unless it compromises, the LTTE has set a virtually impossible challenge to the government with its condition that the government should take concrete steps to establish an interim administration for the North East prior to the Tokyo conference to be held on June 9-10. Unless the LTTE recaptures the flexibility it showed at the outset of the peace process, when it acce-pted a federal solution and accepted partnership with the government in newly established institutions, the government will be hard pressed to satisfy it.

As a government functioning within the rule of law, and compelled to do so by institutions such as the judiciary, the government cannot go beyond the limits set by the constitution. Either the LTTE has to accept a government statement of its acceptance of the concept of an interim administration in principle or the LTTE has to accept an interim set up that is within the framework of the constitution. As neither of these seems likely the ability of the Tokyo conference to move the peace process forward continues to remain in doubt.

But the fact that the Tokyo conference will, in fact, be held is less in doubt after the US government's announcement that its deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage would be taking part in it. The US statement regarding Mr Armitage's participation made the point that the Tokyo conference was an important forum for the international community to demonstrate its solid support for the peace process. The US dominance over world affairs in the post-war Iraq period is too great for even an unorthodox organization like the LTTE to ignore when very powerful countries such as Russia and France appear to have caved in before it.

For the past three years, since the commencement of the Norwegian facilitation in the peace process, the US has been showing a strong interest in peace in Sri Lanka. The unprecedented high levels of World Bank and IMF aid to Sri Lanka this year would be due to this US interest. If Norway's facilitation has been indispensable in maintaining the communication links between the government and LTTE in the present time of crisis, the US interest has provided Sri Lanka's peace process with a global dimension. Sri Lankans may not be fully aware of where their country is being positioned in global affairs through this interest of the global powers. But the fact that this interest exists means that the space for either the government or LTTE to do as they want has shrunk. It is ironic that the LTTE's struggle for self-determination may have taken the country to a point where the global pressures on it to conform have become too powerful for viable long term resistance.

Key Lesson

The LTTE's continuing refusal to re-enter the peace process by graciously accepting the Japanese invitation to the Tokyo conference may lead it to be seen as a potential spoiler of the peace process. As such it would be natural to welcome the decision of the Japanese government to go ahead with the conference, and for the US to send a high level delegation to it, whether or not the LTTE is there. It would also be natural to feel a sense of satisfaction at the prospect of the LTTE getting itself marginalised through its own stubbornness. However, at this juncture, it would be judicious to bear in mind a key lesson from the past that makes any rejoicing over the LTTE being left out both premature and unwise.

The lesson from the past to keep in mind is the sheer impossibility of solving the ethnic conflict without the cooperation of the LTTE. Both the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of 1987 and the peace talks of 1994-95 failed when the LTTE pulled out of them. The LTTE's decision to end those peace processes came as a great disappointment to the expectations of most people. Neither the Tamil nor the Sinhalese people wanted those wars to restart. But when they did, there was a belief that prevailed at that time that the LTTE could be marginalized by military and political means. There was also a hope that a viable solution could be found without it.

But on both occasions it took years of war for the realization to come that the LTTE had to be a part of the solution, and not kept out of it. In particular, the period of the last government, where the effort to marginalize the LTTE both militarily and politically reached its zenith, proved that there could be no solution to the ethnic conflict without the cooperation of the LTTE. The failure of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the PA government must stand as a lesson to those who are determining the peace process today. They need to make a very special effort to bring the LTTE back to the peace process. If the LTTE persists in its refusal to take part in the Tokyo conference it might be tempting to see the conference as paving the way for its political marginalization. There is no question that an LTTE refusal to participate in the Tokyo conference will be an affront to both Japan and Norway which have tried so hard to bring the LTTE into this conference. Norway even sent its foreign minister to the LTTE's capital in the Wanni to meet with its leadership. In its latest effort the Japanese government has once again urged, or virtually appealed, to the LTTE to take part in the conference. But if the past is any guide, the anticipated political marginalization of the LTTE that could occur through international displeasure will not help the peace process.

Timing of demand

In assessing the present situation it must be noted that the LTTE's demand for an interim administration is not unreasonable in and of itself. The concept of an interim administration for the LTTE was floated first by President Kumaratunga herself who once admitted that she has offered the LTTE a 10

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year term on conditions which were never formally announced. The principle of an interim administration once again found expression in the draft constitution of 2000 put before Parliament by the former PA government that was headed by the President. Finally, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe himself upheld the cause of an interim administration headed by the LTTE during the election campaign of December 2001.

Therefore, it can be seen that the problem with the LTTE's demand for an interim administration is not with the concept itself, but with its timing. By making this demand just three weeks prior to the Tokyo conference, and expecting the government to deliver it in concrete terms is unrealistic. This is more so because establishing an interim administration would require constitutional amendment which the government cannot carry out at this time as it lacks the requisite two-third majority in Parliament. In order to achieve such a super majority, the government needs the support of the opposition.

The LTTE itself must share the blame for the government's unwillingness to bring the President and opposition into the peace process. The LTTE has continually described the President in critical, if not hostile terms, which she has both reciprocated and also initiated. The LTTE has not invited the opposition to join the government in the peace talks. Perhaps they should inform the government that they wish to have the opposition also at the peace talks. It will take a significant reversal of its mental framework for the government to negotiate with the opposition and bring them to the point where they might be willing to provide the votes in Parliament for an amendment to the constitution.

But what is quite perplexing is the government's inability to give President Kumaratunga her due place as the elected head of state on occasions of the greatest national importance. For instance it was reported in the media that the postponement of the visit of the Prime Minister of Thailand to Sri Lanka to commemorate an important event in the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism had less to do with the inclement weather than with the absence of proper protocol involving the Presidsent. If this is true, it is a matter of great shame and disgrace that even religious and cultural matters are not spared the pettiness of politics. At least for the sake of national unity, the government should reconsider its differences with the President. It is right and proper that President Kumaratunga should jointly lead the government delegation to the Tokyo donor conference. Such an action could set the stage for a Presidential nominee, if not an opposition representative, to attend future peace talks with the LTTE. This would make it easier for the opposition to give parliamentary support to implement decisions taken at the peace talks. In the meantime, for the sake of sustaining the peace process and obtaining a maximum of economic aid for the people, the LTTE should take its place alongside the government delegation as joint partners at the Tokyo conference. ❐

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'An Interim Administration' Questionble in Law

During recent discussions with Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, the LTTE leader, Mr Vellupillai Pirapaharan, had proposed the setting up of an interim administrative structure with adequate powers to undertake Northeastern reconstruction and development activities. The Government's proposals in response, following discussions with Norwegians, were "out-lined in three documents: a Draft Agreement (between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), an informal paper on 'Elements of a Strengthened and Expanded Mechanism for Reconstruction and Development of the North and East', and finally, a letter suggesting the use of locally elected bodies as a basis for development activities."

In his letter dated 21 May to the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, the LTTE's political advisor Mr Anton Balasingham stated that "the Tiger leadership proposes an interim administrative structure with greater participation of the LTTE, in both decision making and delivery of the tasks of rebuilding the war-damaged economy and restoring normalcy in the Tamil speaking homeland." Citing a previous example of such a proposal, Mr Balasingham said, "In this context, we wish to point out that the Government of India proposed an interim administrative mechanism following the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987, providing the LTTE with a dominant participatory role."

According legal experts, neither the institutional arrangements suggested by Colombo nor an interim administrative structure as demanded by the LTTE can be set up with legal validity. "An interim administrative mechanism similar to the one proposed under the Indo Lanka Agreement can be set up by the President alone; and only while Emergency Regulations are in force", said Mr. V. T Thamilmaran, senior lecturer in law in the University of Colombo. "But even such a body cannot jointly administer and utilise funds to rebuild the northeast, as it would be in contravention of the provisions of 13th amendment to Sri Lanka's constitution", he added.

Under Sri Lanka's constitution there is no provision or legal loophole whereby an effective interim administrative body can be established and be made operable. Colombo has pointed to this fact when Tamil parties made a demand for such a body in 1994 and 1996.

However, in a set of proposals made jointly by the Indian and Sri Lankan Governments prior to signing of the Indo Lanka Agreement (known as the Bangalore Proposals) provision was made (under paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2) for the President to devolve his/her executive power on an interim administration for the interim period with a view to making it an effective mechanism responsible for development and reconstruction of the northeast.

The matter was taken up under the Indo Lanka Accord too, providing for a dominant role for the Liberation Tigers in the proposed interim administration. The institution did not materialise and hence face the litmus test of it legality and operability as Colombo dragged its feet and as events on the military front precipitated war between the Indian army and the Liberation Tigers.

Mr. Thamilmaran said that according to the provisions of Sri Lanka's constitution the President can devolve her/his executive power to an authority or body set up by her/him only under Emergency Regulations. The Emergency, which has to be approved by Parliament every month, lapsed in late 2001 when President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People Alliance lost its majority after its chief coalition partner, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress crossed over to the opposition.

"Firstly, given the current, irreparably tattered state of cohabitation between President and Prime Minister one cannot even remotely contemplate any devolution of executive power to an interim administrative mechanism for the northeast. Secondly, the Emergency is not in force now and no right thinking person would endorse the re-imposition of its draconian regulations. Thirdly and most importantly, Appendix III to the 13th Amendment very clearly stipulates that all matters connected with Public Debt, Foreign loans, government funds, the Central Bank, Audit of the accounts of the GOSL and of the Provinces fall within the purview of the Central government. Therefore an interim body as envisaged under the Indo Lanka Agreement cannot ever be a viable mechanism for jointly utilising and administering funds for the development and reconstruction of the northeast", Mr. Thamilmaran said.

The North East Development and Reconstruction Council (NE DRC) that has been proposed by Colombo as an expanded version of Sub-committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (SIRHN) is not legally viable under the provisions of the constitution for the same constitutional reasons for which the earlier Joint Task Force concept was abandoned.

Article 76.1 of the Constitution expressly prohibits the Parliament from devolving its legislative authority, including the right to handle the country's finances, to any other body. This provision vests in the Parliament the sole right to control the finances and stipulates that the right is inalienable.

Giving further strength to Article 76.1, Articles 148-54 of the Constitution clearly prohibit any institution other than Parliament or one authorised by it from getting involved directly in disbursing or handling public funds.

Article 154 of the Constitution and section 13 of the Finance Act No. 38 of 1971 describe the duties and functions of the Auditor-General. The Article imposes a duty on him to audit the accounts of all public institutions including that of the Prime Minister's Office.

"In this context can the Auditor General be answerable to Parliament if the proposed NE DRC conducts its own auditing with his mere concurrence? No. It again raises the question of the proposed body's legality in another form," Mr. Thamilmaran said.

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A retired senior Treasury official in Colombo when asked to explain the legal nuts and bolts of setting up and running an administrative mechanism as envisaged in several rounds of peace talks said: "Parliament by legislation (Finance Act), the Public Accounts Committee (established under the Standing Orders of Parliament) by its reports, and the Treasury by its minutes have laid down a long series of complicated rules (and practices as well) to secure Parliament's sole control over the country's finances".

"In the final analysis, there is no way one can hope to circumvent this complex web of rules and practices in granting the right to a body to enable Colombo and the Liberation Tigers to jointly utilise and administer funds for the development and reconstruction of the northeast", the retired senior treasury official said.

Under Sri Lanka's Finance Act, expenditure over a certain amount of public money requires the approval of the cabinet. The President of the Republic will chair the meetings of the cabinet.

Also, the administrative mechanism proposed by Colombo has to necessarily recognise the mandate of the External Resources Department as the principal and co- coordinating agency of the Sri Lankan government for foreign loans and grants. Provisions of the Constitution, particularly Appendix III of the 13th Amendment leave no room for any doubt on this matter.

"In this context, the LTTE would be a partner in negotiating loans and grants from foreign governments and donor agencies to bring in the money into the country's coffers. But the partnership would end there. When it comes to spending the monies brought in thus, the LTTE cannot have a say because the involvement of the cabinet in this matter is inevitable in accordance with statutory requirements. As far as the loans and grants are concerned, only the Dept. of external resources can enter into contractual obligations on behalf of the government. While the LTTE would also be negotiating for loans and grants as an equal partner in the proposed body, the signing of the contracts would be the business of the Sri Lankan government alone" Mr. Thamilmaran said.

The SIRHN and the Joint Task Force, which was proposed by earlier as a mechanism for the joint utilisation and administration of funds, were held legally invalid and hence inoperable along the lines envisaged at the peace negotiations for the same constitutional reasons.

"The only way to vest any semblance of legality on the proposed NE DRC is to constitute it as a statutory board or authority by an act of Parliament. But Article 44 of the Constitution very clearly states that the functions of such bodies shall be assigned by the President and that she has the power to take over these functions with or without consulting the Prime Minister. The fate that befell the National Lotteries Board makes this amply clear", Mr. Thamilmaran said.

"But above all many legal experts have overlooked the important fact that an administrative mechanism set up specially to handle reconstruction and development of the northeast would be held illegal by the Supreme Court because the province is under a Governor's rule. The Governor is answerable to the President. Negating or undermining his authority by setting up a separate administrative mechanism for the province would tantamount to eroding the President's executive power, which the Supreme Court held as inalienable in its judgement rejecting the 19th Amendment to the Constitution brought by Prime Minister Ranil Wicremesinghe's government", he pointed out. "Also other provinces might object to such a mechanism", he added.

To change these provisions, a ruling party has to ultimately seek the support of 2/3 of all the members of Sri Lanka's Parliament and the approval of the people at a referendum.

(Source;TamilNet)

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When Constitutions become a mere lottery

Kishali Pinto Jayawardene

It says much for the sanity of our politicians (and their legal advisors) that the uneasy 'cohabitation process' over the past fifteen months should be teetering on the verge of a constitutional breakdown over an issue as unbelievably pedestrian as the management of the Development Lotteries Board.

There is a simple irony secreted in this somewhere; politics and 'managing' the constitution in this country has become, in fact, very much like a lottery in itself, engaged in by individuals who have no conception of constitutional governance.

Ergo, what we have is not a constitutional crisis but a lottery crisis, aggravated by the knee jerk reactions of some Government Ministers, (including reportedly the Minister of the Interior who holds, in another profound irony, the additional portfolio of Minister of Christian Affairs), taking upon themselves to supervise the storming of the Government Press by thugs. This was in order to prevent the printing of the Gazette Notification issued by President Chandrika Kumaratunge, taking over the Board.

If, however, President Kumaratunga is genuine when she complains of reduced allocations from the Board to the President's Fund, could not there have been a civilised dialogue between the parties before the Constitution was resorted to for a takeover? Instead, the almost-but-not-quite fait accompli nature of the Presidential action points to a motive deeper than that purportedly held out.

Statements from the President's Office this week, put the matter very well when they pointed out that "it is odd for a government who fails to consult the President on such vital national issues as the ceasefire agreement, reducing High Security Zones and conceding territorial waters to a second naval force to insist on prior consultation on a lottery."

This is exactly the point. The country would have taken it much better if the office of the Presidency, having a legitimate grievance as it thinks it does with regard to substantive issues arising in the context of the spluttering peace process, acted appropriately in pursuance of its electoral mandate, provided that it did so with due regard for the consequences.

Instead, the hamhanded actions that it indulged in reference to the Development Board Lottery begs the question as to whether we are condemned forever to pursue trivialities induced by populist party politics rather than issues of substance that will shape this country's future.

The office of the President has justified the attempt to take over the Board in reasoning that is breathtaking in its innocence. According to the President, Article 44 of the Constitution gives her an essentially subjective and 'exclusive' discretion in how she treats Cabinet Ministers, Ministries and the assignment of subjects under those Ministries.

This is a constitutional interpretation that sits at odds with the opinion of the Attorney General, whose considered view has apparently been that consultations with the Prime Minister by the President should have been sought before the impugned decision was made by the latter.

In further ill-advised statements that have important ramifications beyond the present political crisis, spokespersons of the office of the President as well as key political figures of the People's Alliance, have thought it fit to belittle the Attorney General, for these views. The Attorney General remains the principal state law officer of the land and public belittling of this office, subject as it has been to invidious political pressure for the past several decades, is highly unfortunate.

As far as Article 44 of the Constitution is concerned, it is important to note that subsection (1) by using the word 'shall', first stipulates a mandatory consultation by the President with the Prime Minister 'where he considers such consultation to be necessary' with regard to two instances.

These are firstly, where the President determines the number of Ministers of the Cabinet, the Ministries and the assignment of subjects and functions to such Ministers and secondly, where the President appoints from among the MPs, Ministers to be charge of the Ministries so determined.

Article 44 (3) meanwhile specifies that the President may, at any time, change the assignment of subjects and functions and the composition of the Cabinet of Ministers. It is expressly provided that such changes shall not affect the continuity of the Cabinet of Ministers and the continuity of its responsibility to Parliament.

This sub section, which does not stipulate consultation of any kind unlike in the case of Article 44(1) is specifically referred to by President Kumaratunga in her letter. Further, the President has taken the view that, in any event, what is envisaged in Article 44(1) is only consultation and not concurrence or in other words, a mere obtaining of the views of the Prime Minister, "when the President considers it expedient to do so". Therein lies the case for the Presidential take over of the Board.

This bare bones reading of the constitutional provisions ignores in its entirety, the doctrine of responsible government, which stipulate a particular working of the constitution that has its origins in basic constitutional principles.

A Constitution, in its most severe sense, is but a "set of rules that authoritatively establishes both the structure and the fundamental principles of the political regime" (Malcolmson and Myers, 1996, p. 31). These rules "constitute" or establish the regime. The intermeshing of these rules and adherence to practices shaped by the context within which those provisions work, owe its logic to a simple rationale.

Constitutions, when written, are documents limited by the times during which they were reduced to writing. As living documents, they cannot be circumscribed by those limitations but are

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supplemented by particular practices which are, as famously pointed out once by Sir Ivor Jennings; "the flesh which clothe the dry bones of the law; they make the legal constitution work; they keep in touch with the growth of ideas....."

These are not mere exhortations but have tremendous political validity. A case in point was in 1975 when Australia underwent what has been referred to as its greatest constitutional crisis, following the dismissal of the Whitlam Government by the Governor-General using his Reserve Powers under Section 64 of the Constitution. Critiqued as a grave subversion of the democratic parliamentary traditions in Australia, this was one notable instance when constitutional analysts warned against 'literal' readings of constitutional documents, pointing out that the doctrine of "responsible government" is an essential part of any country's constitution.

It necessarily followed therefore that the constitutional provisions, (which vested powers of sovereignty exclusively in the head of state), must be qualified by the obtaining of the "advice and consent" of the government in the actual exercise of these powers, even though there was no express limitation to that effect. Fundamentally, the breaching of constitutional principles or conventions as they are commonly called, cannot be resorted to unless there can be exceptional reasons for so doing.

From this viewpoint, no stretch of the imagination can justify the alleged non-allocation of funds from the Development Lotteries Board to the President's Fund as an acceptable or justifiably grave breach of faith for this departure from the principles of 'co-habitation' that the December 2001 electoral mandate imposed on our rulers. For its own part and with regard to crucial issues impacting on the peace process, the Government needs to acknowledge the duty of consultation with the office of the President in a more forceful manner than has been hitherto evident.

In the alternative, the distasteful strong-arm tactics displayed at the Government Press may be a foretaste of what is to come if an open conflict is provoked between the Presidency and the Government. It is imperative therefore that critical interventions by this country's public be made, (some of which have already been evident by the clergy and the business community), calling upon our rulers to act according not only to the letter of the Constitution but also its spirit.

(Courtesy: The Sunday Times)

PM Urges LTTE to Return to Talks

It was "extremely unfortunate that the LTTE leadership has decided to suspend its participation in the negotiations for the time being". "I am however, encouraged by the reiteration of your commitment to seek a negotiated political solution to the question, and in furtherance of this, hope that you would, at this decisive time, review your present stance, and continue a partnership which has as you have conceded, already achieved considerable success. I believe finally this would be in complete accord with the firm desire of all our people that the peace process continues without interruption," Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated in a letter delivered to the LTTE headquarters in Kilinochchi on 30 April in reply to LTTE Chief Negotiator Anton Balasingham's letter (See page 8 Tamil Times, April 2003)

The following is the full text of the Prime Minister's letter dated 30 April 2003:

"I write further to my letter of 22nd April 2003 in response to yours of 21st April, in which you had expressed your organisation's concern in relation to some critical issues on the ongoing peace process.

I must at the outset express my complete agreement with you that during the 14 months in which the Ceasefire Agreement has been consolidated as a result of the sincerity and determination shown by both sides, there has been substantial progress towards peace and development throughout the country. For instance:

* The Ceasefire has held for a period of 14 months; the daily toll of dead and maimed combatants and civilians has been brought to a halt.

* SLMM procedures have been strengthened and its activities and coverage expanded; critical situations which would earlier have led to conflict have been defused and resolved.

* Places of worship and schools occupied by the Military have been handed over.

* The Government and LTTE have established SIHRN an institution for decision-making in which both have equal participation.

* Through a joint approach by the Government and the LTTE to the Donors, a funding mechanism NERF has been established.

* Some of the issues pertaining to the Muslims have been addressed.

* Detailed study of Federal and Government structures has been undertaken by both sides.

* The Joint Gender Committee has been set up.

* Positive working relationships have been established between the parties at operational level.

* The International Donors, both multilateral and bilateral, have already disbursed substantial funding (in excess of US $ 30 million) for humanitarian and rehabilitation work in the North-East.

Although it has not been possible to reach agreement on all matters our joint resolve to cooperate has provided the space and confidence for the international community to participate in rehabilitation and development. The 14-month period of peace has therefore been one of steady progress and hope to our people.

Let me take up one by one, the various reasons which appear to have led your organisation to take what you have termed as a "painful decision".

1. Exclusion of the LTTE from the Preparatory Seminar in Washington:

As you would know, the Japanese

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Government suggested preparatory seminars in Washington, Brussels and Oslo prior to the Tokyo Conference. The Government of Norway later felt that it would forego this opportunity since the Oslo meeting last November had virtually served this purpose. Subsequently for various logistical reasons mainly connected with the Iraq crisis, the decision to hold a meeting in Europe was changed and it was proposed to have a preparatory meeting in Colombo in May. These arrangements were discussed at the meeting at Hakone.

There were two other significant reasons for going ahead with the Washington seminar in April. The first, was the fact that such a seminar would enable the gathering of major Donors who would be present in Washington as participants in the important Spring Meetings of the World Bank and IMF. The other reason was that it was important to obtain commitment of the Donors to this process before their attention was absorbed by the needs of Iraq as a consequence of the situation following that conflict.

The Washington preparatory seminar was not a pledging conference. The multilateral organisations present at the seminar announced their indicative figures under their Country programme at the meeting.

The LTTE's inability to attend the seminar was due to the fact that the organisation still remains a banned organisation under United States Law. I regret the LTTE could not participate and you will appreciate that the Government cannot be blamed for this situation.

From the inception the Government was committed to working with the LTTE in rebuilding the North-East. In fact the Tokyo Conference offered by the Japanese Government as a pledging conference for the Reconstruction and

Development of Sri Lanka too this fact into consideration. The Conference is to be opened by the Prime Minister of Japan.

2. The non-implementation of the terms and conditions enunciated in the truce document:

Both sides have obligations to fulfil the terms of the Ceasefire Agrement. While there has been increasing compliance, I agree with you that there is yet much to be done to implement fully, the provision of the Ceasefire Agreement. Our view is that both parties should commit themselves to doing so. The presence of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission has undoubtedly helped in ensuring, to the extent possible, the observance of the Ceasefire in all its aspects. The final objective of course is normalisation of the ground situation. However in view of the fact that the conflict has been long drawn out, normalisation is bound to be a difficult process. Both sides I know, have been impatient at the pace at which normalisation has taken place and it would be necessary to renew our joint commitment to make progress.

3. The suffering and hardship experienced by hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Tamils:

The highest priority has been given by the Government, your organisation and the international community to alleviate the conditions of the internally displaced, as quickly as possible. We ourselves have pledged at the last election to (a) take steps to make life easier for the people of the North and East, and (b) solve the problems of people who have been displaced and rendered helpless by war. In fact there has been progress. The Government has taken substantial loans from the World Bank and ADB for resettlement of internally displaced persons and the numbers have been reduced significantly.

There is also the further question of de-mining of the lands in which internally displaced persons would be settling and an effective programme is under way with several international Donors committed to humanitarian mine action. Indeed the work of your own TRO and its humanitarian demining unit working in the Vanni in this endeavour is highly appreciated.

Of course there is much more to be done to make life better for the people. There have been delays in implementation due to the breakdown in Government administration as a result of the twenty-year conflict. In the last few weeks we have been discussing the measures to strengthen the effectiveness of implementation and to establish an effective coordination mechanism for administration in the Northern districts - the districts worst affected by the war. The Government will keep the LTTE briefed on these proposals prior to implementation.

We will also convey to you our views on making SIRHN more effective and look forward to reaching agreement on the modifications that are needed. As Mr. Bernard Goonetilleke's letter of 28th April, 2003 would have informed Mr. Tamilchelvan, we have formulated procedures to commence the 15 approved projects while the formal arrangements for NERF are being finalised. The Norwegian Facilitator will be apprising you of the manner in which we are overcoming this problem.

4. The aggressive Military occupation of Northern cities and civilian settlement:

Ever since the Ceasefire, the policy of the Government has been to restore normalcy in order that the civilian population would be enable to carry on their customary livelihood. The visible signs of this are, the increased production in fisheries and the bumper paddy harvest that has been experienced in the recent Maha season in the Vanni.

Though there are yet steps to be taken to reduce the constraints now necessitated by security considerations, the difference in people's lives over the past year is I believe quite evident. The Government is committed, as I mentioned earlier, to resolve the issues of the persons displaced by war. Mr. Austin Fernando, Secretary Defence by his letter dated 27th April, 2003 informed Mr. Tamilchelvan of the intention of the Army to release the two hotels in Jaffna town and the surrounding houses. Pre-fabricated buildings to house the troops have already been ordered. The Report prepared by General Nambiar on the Review of the High Security Zones, as mentioned in the Talks of 6th - 9th January will also be available when the Talks resume.

5. The marginalisation of the people of North-East in the macro economic policies and strategies of the Government:

A careful reading of the "Regaining Sri Lanka" document which contains the vision and strategy for acceleration of development will indicate the

(continued on next page)

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Self determination and conflict regulation

Dr. Brendan O'Duffy,
Queen Mary University of London Visiting Fellow,
(Presentation at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, on 8 May 2003)

Those who assume the LTTE's concession on negotiating within the framework of a united Sri Lanka are, to paraphrase Richard Falk, pretending that the self-determination genie remains in the doctrinal box of a statist world. Instead, as Falk and others recognise, the post-Cold War era has presented real-political challenges to positivist attempts to define or restrict international legal rights of self-determination. The implications for the current Sri Lanka political process are significant.

On the one hand, the Cold War moratorium on self-determination has been replaced by a potentially more open system of recognition based on political expedience and new norms of sovereignty recognition which make the mistreatment of ethnic minorities (or ethnic majorities by a dominant minority) a potential ground for external intervention and eventual state recognition.

On the other hand, the dominant principle of self-determination remains that of non-secessionist or internal self-determination, based on regional autonomy (devolution), federalism, power-sharing and individual and group rights protections. The ambiguity between the evolving norms of external and internal self-determination need to be addressed if a stable constitutional settlement is to be reached. I will argue below that such a stable regulatory framework must build in the seemingly destabilizing right of external self-determination, albeit with mutual veto rules which balance safeguards to territorial integrity with safeguards against unilateral assertions of executive power.

Overview

This article aims first to provide an overview of the recent developments in International Law regarding national self-determination. Secondly, I will try to show from an "outsider's" perspective, how these international legal developments impact on some contemporary academic and public debates regarding negotiation and design of a political settlement in Sri Lanka.

Thirdly, by way of comparison with the British-Irish led process over Northern Ireland, it will be shown that agreement on a novel mechanism for self-determination in 1993 was a pivotal aspect of the pre-negotiation phase leading to the Good Friday Agreement (1998). Finally, I hope to show how a modified version of the concurrent majority formula could be applied to balance the Sinhalese majority wish for the preservation of territorial integrity, with Tamil desires for national self-determination.

The overall aim is to show how creative mechanisms for self-determination and constitutional reform can contribute to the search for mutual exchanges between the protagonists in conflict.

National self-determination

The principle and practice of national self-determination has recently evolved with important implications for conflicts centred on ethno-nationalism. The dominant paradigm from the end of the Second World War to the end of the Cold War was based on the primacy of maintaining the integrity of states. Despite its name, 'International law' continued to recognize only states, not nations, as holders of rights of self-determination.

In the post-Cold War era, modifications to the international legal status of self-determination expanded the potential justification of national self-determination in states whose regimes denied representation to particular sections of the population and were discriminatory based on race, creed or colour. More recent developments with implications for diminishing the statist status quo include international treaties such as the Copenhagen Agreement

(Continued from page 16)

degree to which conflict related development has been emphasised.

Regaining Sri Lanka is the National Economic Policy Framework of the Government. Its objective is to achieve and sustain a high rate of growth for a decade or so which will enable -

(a) the creation of employment opportunities and

(b) generation of sufficient economic resources for long term development of the North-East.

The specific strategies and plans for promoting economic development in the North-East will be worked out in consultation with the LTTE. There is no intention to exclude the LTTE from the process.

One of the achievements for the Government and the LTTE was the ability to cooperate in commissioning the Multi Agency Needs Assessment to identify the reconstruction and rehabilitation requirements of the North-East. Once the two parties agree on this Report, it will become the official planning framework for the rebuilding of the North-East. Reference to the planning framework will be included in the Regaining Sri Lanka document. This planning framework will also be submitted to the Tokyo Donor Meeting in addition to the Regaining Sri Lanka document.

In the face of these very positive developments, albeit not at pace which we might have desired, it is extremely unfortunate that the LTTE leadership has decided to suspend its participation in the negotiations for the time being.

I am however, encouraged by the reiteration of your commitment to seek a negotiated political solution to the question, and in furtherance of this, hope that you would, at this decisive time, review your present stance, and continue a partnership which has as you have conceded, already achieved considerable success.

I believe finally this would be in complete accord with the firm desire of all our people that the peace process continues without interruption." ❐

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(signed by 35 states, including the US), which justifies intervention to uphold democratic regimes.

It remains to be seen if the US attempt to assert this right in international law will be successful. Interventions in Yugoslavia (over Kosovo), Grenada, Haiti, Somalia, and most recently Iraq threaten to establish a new paradigm which elevates inter-state political practice (ostensibly based on democracy and human rights) above positive international law. As Richard Falk has emphasized, the legal justification of the recognition of new states following the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia stretched the international legal interpretation of post-colonial exceptionalism to the point of breaking.

This recent practice is a significant confirmation of the extent to which the effective political outcomes that are consistent with geopolitical preferences ... produce legal results incompatible with earlier conceptions of legal doctrine. Community responses to such state-shattering practice are registered by way of diplomatic recognition and admission to international institutions.

Precisely because of the limits of positive international law within the statist paradigm to manage deep-seated ethno-national conflict, modifications have evolved which attempt to preserve the stability of the inter-state system while encouraging internal or 'non-secessionist' forms of national self-determination, including forms of federalism and devolution, power-sharing, individual and collective minority rights protections.

The Lechtentein Draft Convention on Self-Determination Through Self-Administration treats the latter (devolution and federalism) as necessary steps through which parties to a dispute should attempt to manage conflict, but also recognizes the need for mechanisms of self-determinations. Section I, Art. 1b.defines 'rights of self-determination' as the free determination by those possessing that right of their political status and their free pursuit of their economic, social and cultural development, and may be implemented by establishment as a sovereign and independent State, free association or integration with an independent State, or emergence into any other political status freely determined by the people concerned.

Where persistent claims exist for national self-determination, the absence of guidance from international law makes it imperative for governments to confront and clarify the conditions under which self-determination could be exercised.

Arthur Watts emphasizes in his commentary on the Liechtenstein Draft Convention that: 'where even an adequate degree of self-determination has not been acknowledge, the absence of recognized rules and procedures to deal with the situation has often resulted in war or other forms of conflict leading to extensive human suffering.

Sri Lanka's case

For Sri Lanka, given the uncertainties inherent in delivering internal self-determination in the form of federalism, it would be naive to ignore the need to also regulate process of external self-determination. In fact, in the discussion of some cases below I will argue that regulating external and internal self-determination is a mutually re-enforcing strategy for state-craft.

Some may have been surprised by the apparent concession on Eelam announced by the LTTE and the UNP government at the Oslo round of talks in November 2002. The statement issued by the Norwegian facilitators announced that the two parties agreed to 'explore a solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking people, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka'. But close observers noted the conditionality attached to the world 'explore'. Internal self-determination is to be considered by both parties but neither has actually committed to accepting a purely internal form.

Leaving aside the capacious differences between a confederal versus a federal model, or between a federal and a devolved model, two fundamental obstacles remain in bridging the gap between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. From the government's side, a clear obstacle to selling a federal solution is the lack of confidence among the Sinhalese public, civic society and opposition political establishment as to the permeance of a federal solution. Quite simply, there is widespread fear that federalism (or devolution) would be the first step on the slippery slope to the break-up of the country.

As a local government representative (from the PA opposition) declared: 'What this (UNP) government is negotiating is not federalism, it is simply the break-up of the country. They are giving the LTTE what they couldn't get through war.'

Such fears are long-standing, even foundational of conflict. In the post-independence period the mainly Tamil, Federal Party's advocacy of a federal solution created a Sinhalese nationalist backlash against what was perceived as the inevitable dismemberment of the country.

The claims to territorial statehood made in the Vaddukkottai resolution in 1976 were followed by the TULF manifesto for the 1977 General Election:

There is only one alternative and that is to proclaim with the stamp of finality and fortitude, that, 'we alone shall rule over our land that our forefathers ruled. Sinhalese imperialism shall quit our homeland. The Tamil United Liberation Front regards the general election of 1977 as a means of proclaiming to the Sinhalese government this resolve of the Tamil nation. And every vote that you cast for the Front would go to show that the Tamil nation is determined to liberate itself from the Sinhalese domination.'

Further suspicions of ultimate Tamil motives were raised in 1984-85 when the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) first appeared to accept the Sri Lankan government's proposals for a devolution package, only to reject the proposals after coming under pressure from hard-liners in its base-in-exile, Tamil Nadu.

Many in the Sri Lankan political establishment became convinced that even ostensibly moderate Tamils were committed only to Eelam. Thus the Tamil consensus enunciated in the Thimpu principles in 1985, based on the recognition of Tamil nationhood, self-determination, traditional homelands and full citizenship rights were interpreted by governments and Sinhalese nationalists, in Jehan Perera's words, as meaning 'nothing short of independence'.

More recently, a prominent critic of

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the peace process. Dayan Jayatilleka, has argued that a federal system for Sri Lanka would be 'centrifugal' i.e. would lead to the dismemberment of the country. K. M. de Silva has argued that federal or quasi-federal devolution is not appropriate because the areas outside of the North and (parts of) the East do not desire devolution (though this is contradicted by the demands from Sinhalese-majority provinces for the full implementation of devolution following the establishment of Provincial Councils in 1987).

In my own research to date I have been struck by the near consensus across Sinhalese society of their belief or at least suspicion that the LTTE will use devolution or federalism as a staging post to independence. A former Army Officer's comments were typical: 'They (LTTE) are setting up their own government, courts, extracting taxes. They have a navy and a merchant marine fleet. And their army fought the Sri Lanka Army to a truce. What does this add up to if not an independent state?'

Yet as significant as Sinhalese fears are of a federal settlement, they are matched by the Tamil fears of majority domination in a unitary constitution. (In fact, it is almost axiomatic that groups in conflict under-estimate the obstacles to moderation of maximal goals and over-estimate the unanimity of opinion of 'the other' when involved in negotiations).

Against those who assume that the LTTE leadership has a commanding grip on its local political branches and cadres, one should consider the likelihood that the LTTE concession on Eelam (if it is one) will present significant internal management problems, not least from those supporters and families of cadres who sacrificed their lives in pursuit of Eelam. Observers of the contemporary internal politics of the LTTE describe deep cleavages between the leadership's ostensible commitment to federalism and power-sharing and local rivalries with Tamil-speaking Muslims and Sinhalese, especially in the East.

Scepticism is warranted, but the fact that it is mutually felt is in some ways advantageous because it reveals symmetry and the need for mutualist mechanisms and approaches to conflict regulation. Most importantly, scepticism and distrust should not be allowed to cloud strategic approaches to constitutionalism. Hiding behind essentialist legal or cultural arguments will only perpetuate conflict because they re-enforce perceptions of unjust status hierarchies.

Can this gap in conceptual understanding be bridged? One possible approach could be adapted from the mechanism of self-determination that became the fulcrum for the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland

Unlike in Sri Lanka, the British 'solution' to their exit from colonial rule in Ireland was partition. The Government of Ireland Act (1920) proposed two 'Home Rule' parliaments for Ireland, one in Dublin, the capital of the Catholic-dominated south and a separate Parliament for the Protestant-dominated North.

However, this legislation was only partially implemented as southern insistence on full independence for the whole island clashed with British interests in a) maintaining Ireland's place within the Empire for geo-strategic and political reasons, and b) protecting the interests of the nearly one million Protestant 'unionists' in Ireland. After two years of war, the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) granted dominion status (equivalent to Canada and Australia) to the 26 counties of the 'Irish Free State' and devolved home-rule government (within the United Kingdom) for the remaining 6 counties, which became Northern Ireland.

The opposing claims to sovereignty over the territory of Northern Ireland were central points of contention leading to and through the 'Troubles', which broke out in 1969 following the suppression of the primarily Catholic Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement.

Since that time the (Protestant) unionist majority was adamant that the irredentist claim over Northern Ireland be removed from the Irish Constitution as the condition for any power-sharing deal with the (Catholic) nationalist minority (then 35% of the population) of Northern Ireland.

Gradually, after repetitive cycles of failed negotiation among moderates, followed by intensive waves of paramilitary violence, the British and Irish governments, agreed to institutionalise their inter-governmental relationship, address (but not resolve) their opposing claims to sovereignty and encourage power-sharing, economic, political and judicial reform.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 and the Downing St. Declaration of 1993 represented mutual recognition of the need to modify sovereignty claims created the basis for a progressive set of reciprocal exchanges that re-affirmed the parameters of a settlement.

More specifically, the bi-national, intergovernmental conflict regulation strategy shaped the strategic and tactical choices of the parties and movements in Northern Ireland, creating more stable negotiating blocs with the two governments taking a commanding lead.

Thus, there was a clear relationship between the development of an inclusive process (bringing paramilitaries into constitutional negotiations) and the opening of sovereignty to negotiation in a more symmetrical, bargainable exchange relationship than existed hitherto.

A framework

The Joint Declaration (Downing Street Declaration) signed in London on 15 December, 1993 was a significant advance in British-Irish conflict regulation because it established agreement between the two governments on the primary regulative aspect of sovereignty: a process of self-determination requiring the consent of both a majority of people in Northern Ireland and concurrently a majority of people in the Irish Republic for any change in the status of Northern Ireland. Paragraph's four and five contained the heart of the exchange:

Paragraph 4:... The British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a untied Ireland, if that is their wish.

Paragraph 5: (The Taoiscach) accepts, on behalf of the Irish Government, that the democratic right of self-

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determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland and must, consistent with justice and equity, respect the democratic dignity and civil rights and religious liberties of both communities.

In addition the Joint Declaration reiterated that the parameters of a settlement must be founded on consent and encompassing arrangements within Northern Ireland, for the whole island, and between these islands (Paragraph 2).

By stating that the process of self-determination was for the Irish people alone, the citizens of the Irish Republic were also being given a veto on any unilateral exercise of self-determination by the current unionist majority. In other words, if the current unionist majority, fearing abandonment by their British patron, declared unilateral independence from the United Kingdom, they would be prevented by the current agreement from doing so without the consent of a majority in the Irish Republic. Henceforth, both Irish nationalist and British unionist preferences for self-determination were required for any change in the status of Northern Ireland. For the first time since 1918 the rights to self-determination were subject to all-Ireland consent, to be exercised concurrently in both parts of the island.

Implications for Sri Lanka

The effects of the bi-national treaty in turn shaped the internal debates within republicanism and unionism over participation in negotiations. The negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement itself are beyond the scope of this article. Suffice to say that the mechanism for self-determination was necessary, but not sufficient, for transforming the conflict from violence to constitutionalism.

The agreement on a mechanism for self-determination preceded the negotiation of the subsequent aspects of agreement, including creative power-sharing institutions, substantive devolved authority from the UK, confederal links between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, and reciprocal individual and collective rights protections in both jurisdictions. A vital element in Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble's ability to sell the Good Friday Agreement to a bare majority of his sceptical community was the success in converting the Irish claim to sovereignty to an aspiration for unity by consent.

The mechanism for self-determination was the centre-piece of the separate British-Irish Treaty which is both constitutive and regulative of the Good Friday Agreement. The Irish government amended Articles 2 and 3 of its Constitution to convert its claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland into an aspiration for unity by consent.

In exchange, the British government rescinded two sources of its claims to sovereignty over Northern Ireland as found in Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act (1920) and the Ireland Act (1949). While the United Kingdom's claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland remains (based on the Act of Union of 1800) the agreement to relinquish sovereignty based on the concurrent majority rule establishes a clear constitutional mechanism for re-unification. It should also be noted that bi-national, concurrent majority principle is operative at subsidiary levels of governance, both within the power-sharing executive (now suspended) and at the confederal level in terms of decision-rules within the North-South Ministerial Council.

If the concurrent majority formula was pivotal to encouraging the IRA to modify its ethno-centric claim to self-determination, can a similar mechanism gain LTTE acceptance of a qualified right of self-determination in Sri Lanka?

H. L. de Silva has argued that federalism in the Sri Lankan context will amount to 'evolutionary secession' as de facto territorial autonomy for the North and East will merely 'whet the appetite for more powers'. For de Silva, devolution or federalism has the potential to violate the 'final and essential postulate on which the whole legal order of the Republic rests' because it threatens to undermine the 'sense of unity and the concept of a single collective identity of the People (which is) encapsulated in the concept of the sovereignty of the people which may be properly described as the central norm of the law of the Constitution....' Such rigidly statist views ignore the extent to which this unitary, statist conception itself contributed to subsequent conflict. In particular, it could be argued that the rare conditions de Silva identifies as the justifiable causes for challenging the central norm of the constitution - a government that 'denies to the People their essential rights and freedoms and liberties' - existed in Sri Lanka in the post-independence period.

There are grounds, in other words, for questioning and re-examining the 'pre-existing values which precede and transcend the constitution'. To argue that these values and principles are 'eternal and irrefragable and cannot be compromised by understandings reached by itinerant negotiators or anybody else', raises them to a perennialist or even primordialist axiom whose very rigidity can be considered a source of conflict rather than a source of stability while disagreement persists on the foundational legitimacy of the state. Moreover, any constitution that agrees a mechanism for amendment has agreed a priori to regulate rather than reify sovereignty.

A concurrent-majority mechanism

Neither does one need to accept the bona fides of the LTTE to progress a conflict regulation process. If one believes that the LTTE is bluffing concerning its acceptance of an internal solution, the best strategy is not to overturn the card table but instead to play the hand dealt and call the opponent's hand (whether or not it is a bluff). Already, there is evidence that the LTTE are facing, however grudgingly, the realities of political bargaining: committing in principle to power-sharing (with Sinhalese and Muslim parties) in the East; accepting the principle of multi-party democracy (moving away from its 'sole representative' stance) and signing up to commitments to protect human rights in areas under its de facto authority.

There is no question that these commitments are being breached on the ground but over the longer term, and given reciprocal implementation moves by the Sri Lankan government, these commitments will become increasingly difficult to breach without risking both domestic and international status.

An agreed mechanism for self-determination offers a necessary, though

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not a sufficient, approach to a settlement. The following proposal applies comparative empirical analysis of conflict transformation to recommend mechanisms for self-determination within the terms of the Liechtenstein Draft Convention on Self-Determination. The concurrent majority principle that was the linchpin of the British-Irish (Good Friday) Agreement could be adapted to the Sri Lankan case as follows, assuming the current federalist trajectory of negotiations:

* External self-determination for any constituent part of the Sri Lankan Federation (or devolved unitary state) will be subject to the ascent of concurrent majorities in the province seeking change and concurrently in the remaining Provinces, either individually, or taken as a whole.

* Internal self-determination would also be subject to the concurrent majority principle (as set out above). The regulation of internal, governmental aspects of sovereignty would be entrenched by the same provincial veto power, so that authorities devolved in the settlement constitution are immune from unilateral central retraction.

* A guaranteed minimal interval must be established (7 to 10 years) between any plebiscites on external self-determination.

* A guaranteed process must be agreed for initiating such a plebiscite on self-determination, such as through rights of initiative or through the authority of the Provincial Council and the central government.

* An international treaty with India could be made recognising the concurrent majority mechanism for self-determination in Sri Lanka and institutionalised cooperation on a schedule of common issues, such as fisheries, naval cooperation, migration, anti-crime initiatives etc. Maximally: a common secretariat staffed by representatives from each country. Minimally: regular inter-governmental meetings.

The main advantage of such an approach is to provide clarity on the related questions of external and internal self-determination. The concurrent majority veto powers should reassure the Sinhalese majority on the island that they have an effective veto over any change in the territorial status of the island. This mechanism of self-determination removes the 'slippery slope' threat that many associate with federalism or constituted devolution.

At the same time, the concurrent majority formula guarantees Tamils (or any other potential secessionists) two important safeguards: first, that authorities devolved to the Provinces cannot be rescinded without their consent; secondly, that a constitutional mechanism exists for the achievement of Eelam (or independence, or a reconfigured Province) in the future, albeit subject to the consent of the rest of the island. This approach is consistent with even close reading of the Thimpu principles, which currently define Tamil claims to self-determination.

This formula also fulfils the criteria of popular sovereignty identified by H. L. de Silva and others as foundational of the Sri Lankan constitution because it gives the people (or their representatives) the final say on core regulative aspects of sovereignty, albeit in separate, simultaneous plebiscites (or concurrent majority votes in representative assemblies). Moreover these proposals address the absence of a mechanism for constituting devolved power, which was a central obstacle in securing LTTE consent in all phases of negotiation from the Indo-Lanka devolution attempt from the mid-1980s to the 1997-2000 devolution amendments.

It should also be noted that such a mechanism does not preclude paradiplomacy' or inter-governmental links between or among devolved (or federal) parts of Sri Lanka, including inter-governmental institutions with executive authority over delegated policy areas.

If a peace deal results in separate Northern and Eastern Provinces, for example, it is possible to envisage significant inter-governmental links allowing cooperation between areas claimed as the Tamil homeland while protecting the territorial interests of Muslims and Sinhalese in the Eastern Province. In theory, such inter-governmental links could be extended to confederal relations with neighbouring jurisdictions, such as Tamil Nadu, provided there was agreement between the Indian and Sri Lankan central governments (the latter using the concurrent majority rule).

The same principle could be applied to the regulation of subsequent changes to territorial composition of Provinces, a central point of contention given the ambiguity surrounding the relationship between the Northern and Eastern provinces.

Anticipated objections:

1. Why would LTTE sign up to a mechanism that gives the Sinhalese majority a veto on external self-determination?

This is a particularly serious objection in light of the comparative analysis with Northern Ireland because a central portion of the logic of Sinn Fein acceptance of the concurrent majority rule was and in the belief that Catholic/nationalist will soon become the majority in Northern Ireland.

They have a realistic expectation that they will be able to achieve through referenda what they could not achieve through war. But the achievement of a Catholic/nationalist majority in Northern Ireland will not automatically translate into support for Irish unification because, historically, approximately 15-20% of Catholic/nationalists have expressed support for continuing the union with Britain.

The point is that demographic uncertainty incentives both groups to focus on internal (regulative) sovereignty, federation and power-sharing rather than fixating on the numbers game.

On the other hand, the LTTE demand for external self-determination is not as deeply held as the Irish majority wish for territorial integrity and independence from Britain. In this sense, the nation-state goals are reversed as the IRA was fighting for the achievement of territorial reunification, claiming to fulfill the constitutional imperative to unity (Article 2 and 3) and consistent with a central ambition of the dominant party in Ireland: Fianna Fail.

By contrast, the LTTE's and other Tamil demands for Eelam emerged only after the failure to reach internal accommodation with the Sinhalese majority in the post-independence period.

The goal of Eelam was arguably a result, not a cause, of Tamil disaffection with majoritarian domination, just as Sinhalese majoritarianism was a result of the iniquitous divide and rule strategy of favouring Tamils within the British colonial administration. Con-

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current-majority principles can thus be seen as a way of addressing deeper structural cause of historical conflict, specifically guarding against the type of majoritarianism that sewed deeper divisions.

Secondly the idea that the Sinhalese majority would never accede to Tamil self-determination dismisses the viability of what Ian Lustick identifies as 'state contraction' as an approach to state-craft. With the internationalisation of economies, the scale-advantages, attributed to large territorial states are less deterministic of growth than previously.

As a result, the same logic that applies to Tamil aspirations to become a Singapore or Hong Kong of South Asia has potentially equal implications for the Sinhalese-dominated regions of Sri Lanka. The current government's pursuit of regional economic links with South India and Japan is further testament to potential shifts away from an island-centric political economy. A divided Sri Lanka may be unthinkable for the majority, but constitutional mechanisms should be designed to take into account potential shifts in currently dominant conceptions of governmental and state sovereignty.

Against these forces of disintegration one has to recognise the particular stabilizing factors attributed to small islands. Adrian Guelke has written authoritatively on the bias in international politics for maintaining the integrity of small islands. The same pressures that promote international opinion in favour of Irish, Cypriot, Taiwanese (etc.) territorial integrity are likely to similarly promote the integrity of Sri Lanka.

So despite these countervailing potentials for integration or disintegration, the wider point is that the uncertainty of long-term prospects for either are best confronted and managed through political agreement which allows for either state-consolidation or state-contraction to be regulated rather than merely responded to.

2. Why would Sinhalese majority give the LTTE an excuse to pursue Eelam by force if a self-determination bid was continuously rejected by the rest of Sri Lanka? In other words, after a generation of refusals, Tamils could argue that force was justified because of the intransigence of the rest of Sri Lanka in preventing self-determination.

This is a version of the 'mega-constitutionalism' argument against consensual, inclusive governance. One (slightly optimistic) view is that if the LTTE were to abrogate their commitment to the constitutional mechanism for self-determination, their chances of recognition of any putative Eelam by the international community would be minimal. They would achieve, at best, the pariah status of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Against this view, it is clear that current international sanctions against state disintegration are insufficient to provide external security.

The break-up of Yugoslavia and Ethiopia despite explicit threats of non-recognition by the US did little to deter Slovenian, Crotian or Eritrean secession and almost overnight recognition by the 'international community'. The recognition of Bangladesh during the height of the Cold War moratorium on external self-determination gives further cause for doubt, highlighting once again the need to regulate certainty.

Regionally, Sri Lanka has, on balance, a crucial ally - India - whose interest in preventing a precedent-setting Tamil independence movement is likely to continue to act as an effective deterrence to a non-negotiated declaration of independence. Unlike the 'big brother' relationship between Turkey and TRNC, the Indian 'big brother' to Tamil separatists has a clear incentive to prevent Eelam as a bridge to a greater Tamil homeland. That is why a Lanka-India Accord, including improved formal and informal inter-governmental relations is central to managing the iterative process of conflict regulation.

More generally, the Indian experience supports the argument that a responsive and accommodative centre can reduce separatist demands by ethno-nationalists. Both the modifications of the federal system to recon-figure states along ethno-linguistic lines, and the subsequent practice of power-sharing at the centre, however informal, are consistent with the need to regulate, rather than reify sovereignty. Moreover, far from maintaining a strict moratorium on external self-determination, Kashmir was granted the right to hold a referendum on self-determination.

Even though it has not been implemented, the recognition of the right to external self-determination is a potentially important precedent. On balance, this reactive, ambiguous and un-implemented policy also compares unfavourably to the regulated mechanism being proposed for Sri Lanka.

If we consider the most proximate comparator to the political and strategic calculus of Tamils in Sri Lanka - their co-ethnics in Tamil Nadu - we can offer further hope for the durability of a quasi-federal, substantively devolved settlement.

Against H. L. de Silva's pronouncement that devolution to ethnically concentrated groups will accentuate the trend towards separatism, Atul Kohli has argued convincingly that separatism in Tamil Nadu has been successfully managed and reduced through the modifications to the federal system which offer incentives to cooperate within the federal union.

The reversal of the 'Hindi-first' language policies of the post-Nehru era, granting Tamil co-equal status with the official federal languages (Hindi and English), combined with the opening up to opportunities for non-Brahman castes within the state administration, effectively neutralised the independence demands of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). According to Kohli: As the DMK settled down to

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rule, the predictable happened. Over time, the DMK lost much of its self-determination, anti-centre militancy, as well as its commitment to socio-economic reforms... Once national leaders made important concessions (though within firm limits) and the DMK achieved its major goal of securing increased power, realpolitik concerns took over and mobilising ideologies slowly lost their relevance for guiding governmental actions.

Like the IRA, and for a time the PLO, the DMK was transformed by changed political opportunity structures to shift from a military-political to a political-military movement. In Northern Ireland the resilience of the mechanism for self-determination is demonstrated by the reasonably solid public support for the Good friday Agreement and specifically, the solidity of the republican (Sinn Fein and IRA) commitment to it, despite the lower than anticipated census figures recently published.

Despite tactical appearances to the contrary, the IRA is trading weapons for significant electoral gains, police reform and demilitarisation, thus managing its grass-roots while deepening its stake in the Agreement.

It might lead to a united Ireland, but it might not, and in the margins of uncertainty there is a solid logic for power-sharing and federalism to transcend and changes to constitutive sovereignty. At the same time, the process of co-opting extreme ethno-nationalists into constitutional compromise was a reciprocal exchange. Both the British and Indian governments have had to concede significant aspects of regulative sovereignty, in terms of political autonomy, collective and individual rights protections.

By doing so they have made the prospects of international opprobrium much higher for any group that might assert a continued right to forceful separatism. Broadening the comparisons, we can posit that the best cure against external self-determination is the delivery of stable, regulated, internal self-determination.

Against those who assume that devolved autonomy or federation will lead to secession, comparative research suggests that when devolution or federal solutions fail, it is more often due to the refusal or inability of the centre to implement commitments to devolution or federalism than because of growing demands among separatists. The case of Sikh demands in India is illustrative.

It is the only case in the 11 cases studied by Ted Gurr and his colleagues, in which devolution or other autonomy arrangements led to subsequent demands for independence. Even if we add the recent cases of Chechnya and Georgia within the Russian Federation, we can conclude that even these exceptions support the argument that autonomy arrangements broke down because of the refusal of the centre to implement promised devolved authorities and not simply from the whetted appetites of unilateral separatists. More recent developments in the case of Sikhs in Punjab lend further support to the argument that a responsive centre can reduce demands for independence through substantive autonomy.

In the European context, federation or significant devolution to ethno-nationally homogenous territories has moderated demands for secession among Scots, Catalans, Basques and Flemish separatists. Even if we accept the special conditions which facilitate inter-governmental conflict regulation in Europe, we can also recognise that the South East Asian regional context is also conducive to regulating self-determination, compared for example to most of Africa or significant portions of the Middle East. Sri Lankan economic and political relations with India and Japan in particular are likely to add to the potential reward power necessary to distribute benefits necessary to underpin a political settlement.

In comparative and regional contexts, the joint Sri Lankan-Indian interest in regulating self-determination is a vital asset for conflict regulation because delivering an Indian recognition of the self-determination mechanism reinforces its constitutional sanctity. And inter-governmental co-operation in areas such as trade, infrastructure links, frontier (naval) controls will be necessary to provide psychic and physical security.

It is my contention that the establishment of inter-governmental agreement on the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, along with the principle of internal federation or entrenched devolution established with the 'Delhi Accords' in 1983, were important parameters and foundations for subsequent inter-governmental relations.

Two important indicators of the success in establishing these grundnorms are the failure (to date) of the attempted PA-JVP alliance, which looks likely to stall on the PA's commitment to its own federal principles and opinion polls that show rising support for Indian involvement in the constitutional process. Given that the PA is also in favour of a more prominent role for India, a Lanka-India treaty guarantee would re-enforce the bipartisan underpinning of a settlement, necessary to secure the two-thirds majority to ratify an agreement.

Where significant historical sovereignty claims have been sought consistently, and particularly where they are based on bi-national cleavages, the structures of settlement have to be built on these 'fault-lines' rather than wished away through assumed civic-national primacy.

Those who advocate both strong, centralised, unitary state and/or strong local government assume agreement on the polity, when there is none. It is crucial to understand that the recognition of a right of self-determination does not mean acceptance of the veracity, historically, morally etc. of those claims, merely that they are felt subjectively by a named population (usually) living in a concentrated territorial space.

Instead, as has evolved in the Canadian-Quebec and the British-Irish constitutional relationships, once recognised and constitutionally entrenched, the principle of national self-determination can be regulated in practice by international treaty, domestic judiciary and mediated through routinised inter-governmentalism.

In these cases, it appears possible, indeed necessary, to constitute mechanisms for self-determination, while possibly disagreeing the trajectory of the nation-state. It is also clear that devolving or federating internal phases of sovereignty can be effective in reducing separatism, and thereby removing important sources of disagreement over the nation-state. ❐

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The Peace Process and Human Rights

We the undersigned, have long been committed to the integration of Human rights into every stage of the peace process and are concerned that this was not adequately reflected in the official statement of the last session of talks in Hakone. We note that since then the LTTE has suspended its participation in negotiations whilst at the same time reiterating its commitment to seek a negotiated political solution to the ethnic conflict.

We welcome the appointment of Mr Ian Martin as the Human Rights Advisor to the two negotiating parties at the fourth session of the peace talks in Thailand, 6-9 January 2003. However, we note that the statement issued at the conclusion of the Hakone sessions indicated the apparent lack of commitment by the two parties and their Norwegian facilitators to making meaningful human rights protection an integral part of the peace process in the interim period prior to a final constitutional settlement. We are perturbed that the two parties have still not made a clear and public commitment that they will be bound by these norms in verifiable and effective ways. We believe that no peace in Sri Lanka can be either just or sustainable in the absence of strong and effective protection of the full set of fundamental civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights as recognized in a broad range of internationally accepted covenants. We therefore urge the two parties and their facilitators, as well as the community of bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors to Sri Lanka to reaffirm that the protection of the human rights of all Sri Lankans will be guaranteed throughout the duration of the peace process.

In particular, we write to express our deep concern over the following:

1. We were disappointed that the two parties at the Hakone session of talks opted for a markedly limited focus on HR. While the parties have requested Mr. Martin to draft a "Declaration of Human Rights and Humanitarian Principles" which would "reflect aspects of fundamental human rights and humanitarian standards," in our view this falls short of a commitment to the protection of the full range of rights recognized in international human rights and humanitarian law. We call on the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to commit themselves to a comprehensive and binding human rights document, which would be in force until a final constitutional settlement (itself grounded in this same set of international norms) is agreed to and enacted.

2. We also call on the negotiating parties to agree explicitly to an effective mechanism for the monitoring and protection of human rights. Any such system would require from the start a strong international element that is fully independent of the parties to the conflict and that would have as its mandate the protection of internationally recognized human rights and humanitarian law. The agreement by the two parties at Hakone to "undertake to ensure" that "aspects of fundamental international human rights and humanitarian standards" are "respected in practice by their personnel" is no substitute for a strong mechanism that would allow for independent and effective monitoring.

We are disappointed to note that the Hakone statement makes no firm commitment to any monitoring mechanism. It states instead that Mr. Martin has been asked to submit "proposals for the strengthening of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka to enable it to develop the capacity for increasingly effective monitoring throughout the country," and that these proposals "would involve international advice and assistance to the HRC from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights" and in "close coordination with" UNICEF, UNHCR, and the SLMM. While we appreciate the recognition that the Human Rights Commission does not presently have the capacity for effective human rights monitoring, we are disturbed by the absence of provisions for effective monitoring which would commence immediately. We are furthermore concerned that an arrangement whereby certain agencies would have - at most - the task of monitoring only a specified set of rights - "UNICEF in relation to child protection, UNHCR in relation to the protection of returning internally displaced persons and refugees, and SLMM in relation to acts against the civilian population"- is not an adequate substitute for an independent and effective body of international monitors.

Relying on the SLMM to offer assistance to the Human Rights Commission for the prevention of "acts against the civilian population" is clearly not adequate, given the fact that the primary commitment of the SLMM remains the preservation of the cease fire agreement, not the protection of civilians' rights.

3. With regard to the need for independent monitoring, we are concerned by the emerging outlines of the "Action Plan" for the rights of children, the monitoring of which "will be undertaken by a steering committee comprising of the TRO and the Dept of Probation and Childcare Services, and facilitated by UNICEF".

We are especially concerned by the provision that children demobilized from the ranks of the LTTE will be housed in "transit centres co -managed by the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) and UNICEF". The provision that " local probation and child care services officials will have periodic access to the transit centres" is in our view inadequate. Without specification of how long the children will remain "in transit," or specific rules to guarantee the protection of the rights of the children involved, such an arrangement is subject to potentially grave abuse. Without independent, effective and continuous monitoring , even the strongest set of rules would be of little avail.

Many of the concerns outlined above are connected to the general limitations of the tripartite "Government-LTTE-International Agency" model that the two parties seem to have ac-

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Assessment of Needs in the Conflict Areas of the North East

Muttukrishna Sarvananthan

Multilateral organisations such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) jointly prepared an Assessment of Needs in the Conflict Affected Areas of the North East in April 2003 to be presented at the forthcoming Sri Lanka Donor Forum in Tokyo (see www.peaceinsrilanka.com) This document was based on a number of sectoral and sub-sectoral reports, which should be made available for public consumption as well. This note will briefly comment on the process (of preparation) and the contents of this document.

There was a fundamental problem in the process of preparing this document. This exercise was meant to assess the needs of the people of North&East (N&E) in a pause-in-conflict situation, but there was hardly any consultation with the people themselves. Of course it is not practical to consult each and every person in the N&E. Nevertheless some focus group meetings at the district level (at least) could have been arranged. Further, in a democracy the elected members of parliament and local government could be reasonable proxies for the people. Hence, the needs assessment exercise should have consulted the elected representatives in the N&E as well.

Instead, the consultation process involved meetings with the LTTE, central government representatives in the province (Government Agents and kachcheri staff), N&E provincial administrative staff, local government staff, representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs - local, national and international) working in N&E, academics and representatives of local businesses. Many local NGOs and trade associations in the N&E are politically manipulated, and therefore cannot be regarded as independent and objective. The need assessors bent over backwards to accommodate the needs of the LTTE that is unrepresentative. Although most of those consulted may have expressed the needs of the local people the consultation process is not complete without meeting the people themselves and their elected representatives. This is a major drawback of the needs assessment exercise.

As regards the contents of the needs assessment document there are two elements. One is the identification of needs and the other is the costing of the identified needs. The needs identified in the document are by and large real. However, there are some key missing components. For example, originally the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was expected to identify needs on the issue of governance in the N&E. Governance transcends human rights that have been covered in the needs assessment (Section 3A). We understand that due to the objection raised by the LTTE the proposed needs assessment on governance was left out. This is an instance where the needs of the people were sacrificed in order to appease the LTTE. This is very unhealthy because sound governance is a prerequisite for reconstruction of a region/country in the aftermath of conflict (see Needs Assessment for Recovery and Reconstruction in Afghanistan prepared jointly by the ADB, UNDP & WB in January 2002). Besides, the extent of identified needs cannot be authentic given the time limitation.

Capacity building is obviously the overarching need in the N&E, which is clearly acknowledged in the needs assessment report. For capacity building to take place sound governance is sine qua non. Even a year after the signing of the MoU qualified professionals, administrators, managerial/finance personnel, et al are hesitant to work in the N&E primarily due to poor governance in those areas, especially in LTTE controlled areas. Capacity building cannot be implanted from outside; it has to indigenously develop within the N&E by retaining human capital. Retention of human capital is not possible without a dramatic improvement in governance throughout the N&E particularly in LTTE held areas. Therefore, sound governance is central to reconstruction efforts, which is unfortunately not covered in the document.

The costing of the identified needs is at best guess-estimates. It is simply impractical to do a proper costing in just two months. More time could not be given for the exercise because the people expect tangible benefits on the ground in the shortest possible time. The original cost estimation was more than double that is presented in the document. We understand that this is because the government wanted the original estimation to be slashed by half for reasons best known to it. First of all, there is no guarantee that the donors will pledge whatever is asked for. Secondly, there is no guarantee that whatever is pledged at the Tokyo Donor Forum will be actually paid. Most of the foreign aid pledged at a similar Tokyo Donor Forum for the reconstruction of Afghanistan in early-2002 has still not materialised for a variety of reasons. Under these circumstances the decision to downsize the original cost estimation was a blunder.

Economic infrastructures (roads, railways, ports, telecommunications, power, irrigation, water & sanitation) are expected to consume 46% and social infrastructures (education & health) 12% of the total reconstruction cost

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cepted.

The less than transparent and inclusive process of developing policies or formulating action plans, excluding civil society participation, prejudices the quality of their content and effectiveness of their implementation. In conclusion, we call on all the parties involved, including the international donors, to ensure that meaningful human rights protection is adopted in practice as an integral part of Sri Lanka's peace process.

Signed: Sunila Abeysekera, Sunil Bastian, Sunanda Deshapriya, Rohan Edrisinha, Desmond Fernando, Mario Gomez, Ketheshwaran Loganathan, Manouri Muttetuwegama, Ramani Muttetuwegama, Jehan Perera, Kingsley Rodrigo, Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Suriya Wickremasinghe, Joe William, Javid Yusuf.

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(pp4). Therefore, almost 60% of the total reconstruction costs are apportioned for economic and social infrastructures. In a region emerging out of two decades of conflict it would be prudent to use labour-based technologies (as opposed to heavy machinery-based) as much as possible (in so far as there is no trade-off on time taken to complete the work and the quality of such work) for rehabilitation and reconstruction of economic and social infrastructures so that maximum employment opportunities could be created. For example, these labour-based technologies have been quite successful in the post-conflict reconstruction of Cambodia. Perhaps the cost of infrastructure rehabilitation / reconstruction could be considerably reduced if more emphasis is placed on labour-based technologies.

The second largest component (after economic infrastructures) of the total cost of needs is for housing, which is 18% (pp4). There is a dearth of data on damage to and destruction of houses in the N&E. Hence, data presented on housing needs (Section 3D) should be treated cautiously.

The assessment of needs in the agriculture sector (including livestock, fishery and forestry) (Section 3F), the primary economic activity in the N&E, is very disappointing to say the least. Further, the assessment of needs in the industrial sector is submerged in the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Development part of the 'livelihoods' section (Section 3G), which is a serious lacuna in the needs assessment document. Industrial development should have been given greater prominence.

It is amusing to note that 'livelihoods' have been identified as a separate sector (Section 3G) in the needs assessment document. Livelihood is a crosscutting theme and therefore cannot logically form a separate sector. Furthermore, the section on 'protection and resettlement' (Section 3A) has partly covered livelihood issues. This is a demonstration of donor-driven character of this document. The employment and skills training component of Section 3G should have been covered as a separate section because of its overarching character like capacity development (Section 3H).

It is a pity that the section on management of donor funds, which is of immense importance, is not made available for public scrutiny. The Sri Lankan experience of management and utilisation of foreign aid has been rather poor. Now in the present context of the reconstruction of the N&E the management of donor funds would acquire greater significance because of the anticipated flow of foreign aid to a region, which is largely unaccountable and non-transparent. ❑

NEWS TRACK

Colombo optimistic: May 1 - The United National Front government of Sri Lanka Wednesday expressed optimism that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam would participate in the Aid Donors' Summit, which is scheduled to be held in the first week of June in Tokyo, Japan.

The government's chief negotiator, Minister G.L.Peiris, in his cabinet press briefing said that differences of opinion that arose between the government and the LTTE have now been resolved, as the government has taken favorable steps regarding the suggestions made by the LTTE.

Mr. Peiris further said talks held between the Norwegian diplomats and the LTTE's political advisor, Mr.Anton Balasingham, have helped to find practicable solutions to problems identified, and he expressed the hope that more constructive progress could be witnessed in the peace process in the future.

According to Mr. Peiris, the Japanese special peace envoy, Mr.Yasushi Akashi, and the Norwegian deputy foreign minister, Mr. Vidar Helgessen, would arrive in Colombo shortly and that both would hold crucial talks with the Prime Minister and members of the government peace team and later, both would visit Kilinochch to hold talks with the LTTE leadership.

JVP wants decommissioning: May 1 - The JVP called on the government to make the decommissioning of long range weapons held by the LTTE a minimum condition for the removal of High Security Zones. "Discussions should begin on disarming the LTTE, if not at least heavy and long-range weapons must be decommissioned. Weapons that are decommissioned can be given to an international organisation if necessary and not the government," General Secretary of the party Tilvin Silva told the press..

The government's decision to move the army camps from HSZs in Jaffna came in for severe criticism with the JVP alleging that this had been achieved through the collusion of both the government and LTTE. Mr. Silva asserted that the government ploy was to create in the minds of people a terror of the resumption of war and grant LTTE demands. "The government speaks of a bloodbath and puts fear into the minds of people about a resumption of war. Then it grants what the LTTE demands. There is no fear at this time that the LTTE will withdraw from talks, because they are achieving much more than they would through war," he said.

World Bank funded NEIAP: May 1 - In a press release, officials of the World Bank funded North East Irrigated Agricultural Project (NEIAP) said, "NEIAP authorities could witness vast improvement in the implementation of agricultural development projects after the TRO took charge of the social mobilization work in the Mullaitivu district. NEIAP has planned to restore thirty tanks in the Mullaitivu district. Restoration work on twelve tanks began in 2002. Work on the balance eighteen tanks is to begin in this year. 162 acres under Kalvilankulam tank in the Thunukkai division and 106 acres under Kallavilankulam tank in Manthai east division would be brought back for paddy cultivation once the restoration at an estimated cost of nine million rupees is completed. Meanwhile the selection of beneficiaries from the war-affected families under the livelihood assistance scheme is underway. In addition to this an office of the NEIAP and a training centre would be opened in Mullaitivu district shortly."

Navy captures boat: May 1 - Sri Lanka Navy took into custody a boat with six Tamils including a woman off Koneswaram Paul Point on 28 April. A 9 mm pistol, 15 live cartridges, two magazines and 8 detonators were detected from their possession. It has been revealed under interrogation that the suspects had set out from Nampur.

Economy better than expected: May 1 - Sri Lanka's economy expanded by a better-than-expected 4 percent in 2002, boosting hopes for strong growth in the

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current year, the central bank said in its annual report. The figure beat the bank's forecast of 3.5 percent growth for 2002 and successfully reversed the country's first ever economic contraction of 1.5 percent a year earlier.

The central bank also forecast Sri Lanka: "In 2002, the economy recovered from the setback it experienced in 2001, benefiting from improved domestic conditions, mainly resulting from the peace process'" and better financial management, the bank said in its 2002 annual report released recently.

But the bank's 2003 projection hinges on the government's ability to maintain momentum. "Every effort must be made to move forward in the peace process, achieve the envisaged fiscal targets and implement structural reforms," the report said. The bank warned that a return to war would prove disastrous for the island's economy.

Relocate HSZs: May 1 - In a letter addressed to Mr. Austin Fernando, secretary to the Ministry of Defence in Sri Lanka, Mr. S.P. Thamilchelvan, head of the political section of the LTTE, expressed LTTE's dismay at SLA's new proposal to relocate the High Security Zone (HSZ) within Jaffna town. He further requested early action to move the military complexes from densely populated areas.

Great role of Hinduism: May 2 - Inaugurating the Second World Hindu Conference in Colombo, Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe said that Hinduism is the oldest religion practised in Sri Lanka and that it played a great role developing the island's culture. Hundreds of Hindu and other religious scholars and clergy gathered under the aegis of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Hindu Affairs for a five day conference on Hinduism.

In his inaugural address the PM said further: "We meet at a time when we are trying to bring peace to Sri Lanka. We embarked on difficult peace process, but we have come this far today. But it is not easy. All parties have made a commitment not to engage in violence and to uphold the rights of all communities. We all have to denounce violence and it is only then it would be easy to achieve peace. We have to find an acceptable political settlement. But it is still easier said than done."

Several senior United National Front (UNF) ministers also took part in the inauguration along with the PM. The conference opened at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall near Colombo.

US, LTTE and peace process: May 2 - The United States said yesterday that although guarded optimism surrounded the peace process in Sri Lanka, the Bush administration would continue to designate the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organisation until it unequivocally renounced terrorism in both word and deed.

Secretary of State Colin Powell speaking at a meeting to mark the release of an annual report on the patterns of global terrorism last year reiterated that with help of a broad coalition the US would make certain that terrorists and their supporters were not safe in any corner or cave of the world.

Referring to the situation in Sri Lanka and the LTTE Mr. Powell said: "The positive developments in Sri Lanka that began in 2001 continued in 2002. Historically, the LTTE has been one of the world's deadliest terror groups - it pioneered the use of suicide vests and has committed far more suicide-bomb attacks than any other terrorist organization. The ceasefire between the LTTE and the Government, established in December 2001, was formalized in February 2002. Formal peace negotiations began in September 2002 and were continuing into 2003.

"The LTTE has publicly accepted the concept of internal autonomy within a federal Sri Lankan state, conceding its longstanding demand for a separate Tamil Eelam state. Its recent public statements give reason to hope that it intends to transform itself from a terrorist organization into a legitimate political entity."

Peace demo in Mannar: May 3 - More than 3000 people demonstrated in support of peace demanding full implementation of the ceasefire agreement between Colombo and the Liberation Tigers. At the conclusion of the meeting, a memorandum was submitted to the additional government agent of Mannar. The memorandum states, among other things, that the Tamils and the LTTE have bitter experiences of being "deceived and hoodwinked in many previous peace talks" and that "in the circumstances it is not unreasonable on their part to adopt a policy of caution."

"We also solicit the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam who have gradually built up International image and recognition, to temper their approach with tact and wisdom and thereby convince the International Community of their firm desire and determination for peace through political negotiations."

WB's push for peace: May 3 - The World Bank today called for progress in Sri Lanka's fledgling peace process and said only greater political stability could ensure foreign and local private investments in the embattled island.

Visiting World Bank Managing Director Peter Woicke said he hoped the suspension of ongoing peace talks between the Colombo government and Tamil Tiger rebels would be temporary and they would return to negotiations soon.

"The big money will come if there is a guarantee of stability," Woicke said adding, "We hope the peace process will make further progress and this country has a good potential if there is peace." The World Bank was named the custodian of international donor money to be spent on rebuilding the island's war torn northern and eastern regions during earlier round of talks between the government and Tamil Tigers in January. "We have an exposure of about 100 million dollars and are always looking at ways of increasing that," Woicke said.

The Bank will maintain the North-East Rehabilitation Fund (NERF) which was set up on April 11 and the formalities before disbursing money will be completed in a "few days," a Bank official said. The Tamil Tigers had complained about slow progress in NERF allocating money for projects identified by a sub-committee of peace negotiators. Woicke said he believed there could be more investments in tourism to capitalise on the island's vast beaches and scenic highlands and earn much needed foreign exchange.

27 Intelligence operatives killed: May 3 - Within a period of one year the LTTE has assassinated about 27 intelligence operatives attached to the three armed forces, reports said in Colombo. These killings have been carried out after signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Sources said that the LTTE had appointed 'Prabha Master' as the new leader of its Pistol Group (PG), which had carried out these killings islandwide. Investigations revealed the three teams have now been deployed in Colombo to carry out killings against the IUM (Intelligence Unit Members). Information received is that the prime target of LTTE is to first get rid of the informants and then strike at the potential officers of the three security forces.

The Police have so far not been able to apprehend any suspects in connection with the killing of S. Devaraj, a military informant, who was alleged to have been shot by the LTTE on the eve of April 26 at Dehiwala. Director Military Intelligence, Brigadier H. Hendawitharana, told the press that Devaraj was brought down to Colombo from Tirukkovil in August

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last year, especially because of threats to his life from the LTTE.

Even his family members were brought down to Colombo to prevent him venturing out from his Tirukkovil residence. Most of the times he stayed inside the camp and special escort was given to him every time he wanted to go out. But, unfortunately he had not even informed the guard on duty when he left home on this occasion, with his wife on a shopping mission, Brigadier Hendawitharana said.

Asked what action the DMI has taken to prevent such incidents in the future the Brigadier said that several measures have been taken but refused to divulge them.

A three member group which had come in a three-wheeler auto taxi shot him dead and disappeared. He was shot at 6 times with a 9mm pistol.

281,663 IDPs return home: May 3 - Based on the latest government estimates, the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees (MRRR) in collaboration with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimate that from January 2002 up to date approximately 281,663 internally displaced persons have returned home, relocated elsewhere or are in transit. This figure is based on information gathered by Government Agents in each district and subsequently reported to the Policy Planning and Co-ordination Unite (PPCU) at the MRRR, a press release from the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees stated.

Ex-EPDP Chairman shot dead: May 3 - Former chairman of the Karaveddy south/west Pradeshiya Sabha (PS) Mr.Tharmarajah Jeyarajah was shot dead today around 6 p.m. at Thumpalai Maniayakaran junction near Point Pedro by unidentified gunmen who came in a motorbike, police sources said.

Forty-year-old Jeyarajah was a father of three children and was elected Chairman of the local body on behalf of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP). He went out of office with the dissolution of the local body when its life term expired recently.

Two unidentified gunmen who came on a motorcycle stopped the jeep in which Tharmarajah Jeyarajah was returning home from the Nelliady office of the EPDP with two others. The gunmen had shot him through his forehead and fled the scene, police said quoting civilians in the area.

One of the two persons accompanying the deceased in the jeep fled from the scene with gunshot injuries. The other person had made a statement to the Point Pedro Police about the shooting.

An angry EPDP leader Douglas Devananda has alleged the involvement of the Tamil Tigers in the killing. "There is no end to their violence. A truce and a series of peace talks have failed to change their stripes. The killings, abductions, extortions still continue and we are suffering at their hands," Devananda said.

The LTTE has been accused of preventing other Tamil political parties in the north from engaging in political activities, and the worst affected is the EPDP and EPRLF which oppose the Tigers' claim to sole representation of Tamils.

Devananda said EPDP leaders in the north and the east were being systematically eliminated by the Tamil Tigers. He said following a truce between the government and the LTTE in February 2002, other Tamil political parties had had to give up arms, leaving parties like the EPDP vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Peace facilitators in Colombo: May 4 - Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Vidar Helgessen with his special emissary Mr. Erik Solheim and Japanese special peace envoy Mr.Yasushi Akashi separately arrived in Colombo today to initiate talks with the leadership of the United National Front (UNF) government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on the resumption of the stalled peace process. The seventh round of peace talks between the government and the LTTE scheduled from April 29 to May 2 did not take place due to the decision of the LTTE that it would not participate in the peace talks for the time being until decisions arrived at peace negotiations held earlier are implemented.

EPDP member abducted: May 4 - Eelam People's Democratic Party has complained to the head of the SLMM that on May 2, 2003 at about 7.45 p.m., Thirugnanam Sivakumar alias Vellu, an EPDP member was abducted in Jaffna while he was travelling in a bus along Palaly Road.

"Sivakumar had got into the bus from Jaffna town and was on the way to his brother's place in Urumpirai, when, two LTTE cadres got into the bus at 'Kettabol' junction, about 1 km from the town, and forced him out. Then they put him into a black colour car that was readily parked there and took him to the LTTE office at Vyman Road.

"At the LTTE office he was severely beaten up and manhandled. He was questioned at length about the EPDP activities. They scolded the EPDP leader Douglas Devananda and its members in filth and told him that all the EPDP members in Jaffna would be taught a lesson. Eswaran, Sangar and Myuran of the LTTE were amongst those who had beaten and questioned him. The interrogation went on till midnight and then he was allowed to sleep on the floor with his hands tied up.

"Around 3 a.m. he escaped from their custody and ran to the nearest police post at "Palam Road" and the police on duty helped him to free his hand. From there he went to the EPDP office at Stanley Road, then proceeded to the Jaffna police station and reported the incident. The following belongings of Sivakumar are still with the LTTE: Cash Rs. 48,750, gold chain, gold ring, wrist watch, the shirt and sandals he was wearing," the EPDP claims in its complaint.

Balasingham arrives: May 5 - Political advisor of the LTTE Mr.Anton Balasingham arrived in Killinochchi today via Katunayake international airport after having discussions with Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Vidar Helgessen in Colombo. Mr. Helgessen later told media persons that meeting with Mr.Balasingham was constructive and they were able to identify some of the obstacles that confront the present peace talks being taken forward.

Meanwhile the Norwegian mediators Mr. Erik Solheim and Vidar Helgessen and Japanese peace special envoy Mr.Yasushi Akashi met the Prime Minister Mr.Ranil Wickremasinghe on 4 May and held extensive discussions to find ways to resume presently stalled peace talks. Ministers Milinda Morogoda, Mr. G.L.Peiris and Minister Mr.Rauff Hakim were also present at the discussion.

Grenade attack on soldier: May 6 - Patkunam Ramesh employed as a soldier of the Sri Lanka army's National Guard (SLNG) was wounded in a grenade attack last night in Batticaloa town, police said. Patkunam Ramesh was at his home in Puthur in the Batticaloa district when he was attacked.

Ranil's roadmap for peace: May 6 - Sri Lanka today called for a "road map" for ending the island's drawn-out ethnic conflict amid stepped-up international diplomacy to revive stalled talks with the Tamil Tigers.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told parliament that even though the talks with Tamil Tigers were at an impasse, his government wanted to develop a plan to encompass the thorny issues of power-sharing.

"We will in consultation with all parties proceed to develop a road map towards this objective," he told parliament.

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"This (road map) will set out with clarity the sequence in which the substantive issues will be addressed in the unfolding process, so that the objective sought to be accomplished and the means by which this goal will be reached, becomes apparent."

"The international community whose goodwill is abundantly at our disposal is engaged in a professional exercise of shuttle diplomacy which has already begun to show promising results," Wickremesinghe said.

He did not indicate when the talks could resume, but said the negotiations so far limited to the government and the LTTE should be expanded to include Sri Lanka's second largest minority, Muslims. "It is an imperative requirement at this stage of the deliberations that a delegation articulating the aspirations of the Muslim community should have the opportunity of participating at discussions relevant to the Muslims at the plenary sessions (of peace talks)," the prime minister said

EPDP seeks LTTE assurance: May 6 - The EPDP says it will ask the government to seek an assurance from the LTTE that they will stop their atrocities against other political parties. EPDP Spokesman Thavarajah said today that if the LTTE fails to provide such an assurance, the EPDP will demand their legitimate weapons back for self defence. The EPDP is accusing the LTTE of eliminating local level politicians to gain control of local government bodies while sending out warning messages to members of rival parties. Three of their local leaders have been assassinated over the past month. EPDP leader Douglas Devananda says that the ceasefire agreement which forced the Tamil parties to give up arms had resulted in making other Tamil parties and its leaders defenseless and vulnerable.

Rs. 1720 m. for N-E schools: May 6 - The World Bank and Asian Development Bank have allocated Rs. 1720 million for upgrading school education in the North and East.

The World Bank has allocated Rs. 1000 million for the development of 80 selected schools in the North and East. This programme is implemented under the Second General Education Project (GEP2).

GEP2 will support the reconstruction of school buildings and other facilities to develop the educational infrastructure system in these selected schools, which were destroyed during the ethnic conflict.

The Rs. 720 million allocated by the Asian Development Bank is for the Secondary School Education and Modernization Project. This project is currently in the process of supplying computers to schools enabling school children to get acquainted with modern technology.

Committee to probe killings: May 6 – Prime Minister Wickremasinghe has appointed a three-member committee to probe the spate of killing of Army informants in recent months.

The Prime Minister gave the three member committee, comprising Defence Secretary Austin Fernando, Army Commander Lt.General Lional Balagalle, and Advisor to Ministry of Defence Merril Goonaratne one week for finalising the report.

The Prime Minister has asked the Committee to probe the security lapses that resulted in the killing of Army informants despite the specific security measures ordered by the government for their safety.

The Committee has also been tasked with looking into what preventive action that has been taken to-date by the Army and probe the weaknesses in the security arrangements for the Army informants.

Suicide boat found: May 6 - A Police and Army combine operation unit has detected a Sea Tiger suicide boat hidden in Velvetithurai in northern Jaffna peninsula on 5 May, according to a senior Police officer. According to him the troops discovered the boat on a tip off given by the villages living in Polikandi East. He said, "The boat was hidden in a shrub jungle close to an onion plantation behind the Velvetithurai hospital about 800 meters away from the sea. Troops found 14 Claymore mines weighing 14 Kg each and 3 Bangalore Torpedo charges weighing 21 Kg each with 2 Primer caps fitted to each unit." He said that the explosives were connected with detonator cords and packed with regifoam and this was the first time the Security Forces had detected an explosive ridden boat of this nature.

Indictments against Dalada Maligawa suspects: May 6 - The indictments on the accused in the lorry-bomb attack on the Sri Dalada Maligawa at dawn on January 25, 1998 were served by the High Court Judge of Kandy D. S. C. Lekamwasam, yesterday.

Three of the four accused were present in the High Court of Kandy. The first accused Subramaniam Ravindran is absconding. Accused Muthuligam Jeevarajah alias Master, Muttusamy Pillai Dharmaligam and Krishnasamy Ramachandran were served with the indictments and the charges were read out in Tamil.

Hearing was put off for May 12 and the presiding judge informed the accused and the 22 witnesses named that hearing would take place on May 13.

The indictments include 149 counts with 29 productions. One hundred and fifteen witnesses have been listed.

Peace envoy in Killinochchi: May 7 - The Japanese special peace envoy Mr.Yasushi Akashi arrived in Killinochchi today to meet leaders of the LTTE and was received by deputy political secretary of the LTTE Mr.S.Thangan, sources in Vanni said. The Japanese ambassador in Colombo and several diplomats accompanied Japanese special peace envoy. Mr. Akashi is expected to meet the leader of the LTTE Mr.V.Pirapaharan, Mr.Anton Balasingham and political head Mr.S.P.Thamilselvan.

LTTE's participation critical: May 7 - "Participation of the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the International Aid conference to be held in Tokyo next month is crucial for obtaining much needed funds to develop both LTTE controlled areas in the Northeast and Sri Lanka south. If the LTTE fails to attend, international community will be reluctant to commit funds. Further, it will also be a setback to the peace process," said Norway's special emissary Eric Solheim in Vavuniya today.

In Jaffna, Solheim met with civil groups and Sri Lanka military commanders and visited different areas lying within high security zones.

During a meeting with the reporters Solheim said, "there is intense diplomatic activity to revive the peace process. But the success of the talks and the progress of the peace process very much depends on the hands of the leaders of the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers."

SLA to relocate 152 military camps: May 7 – Addressing a press conference along with the former Indian lieutenant general Satish Nambiar in Colombo today Sri Lanka's defence minister Mr.Tilak Marapone said his government had decided to relocate about 152 Sri Lanka Army (SLA) units in the northeast province and the relocation would take place in a manner that will not endanger the national security of the country, sources said.

Mr.Marapone further said the government has decided to reduce the size of the high security zones in the northeast

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to ease civilian lives. "I along with Peoples Alliance parliamentarian Mr.Lakshman Kadirgamar would hold talks with Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar Thursday on the high security zone issue," Mr.Marapone said. Minister pointed out that no one has asked the government to remove the HSZ in the northeast. But request has been made to the government to reduce the size of the HSZ. to allow resettlement of the internally displaced, he said.

"The Sri Lanka military has been instructed not to enter into any confrontation with the LTTE in areas under its control. The Sri Lanka government has not recognized the Sea Tigers as a legitimate naval unit. However we should accept the fact that the LTTE has a naval unit and an army under its control. It will be foolish to say that the LTTE has no army or navy," said Defence Minister Mr.Tilak Marapone.

Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar said he had prepared the report on the high security zone issues with a view to take forward the present peace process. "My suggestions and proposals regarding the activities of the Sri Lanka Army should be based on supporting the present peace process. I have prepared my report on HSZ issue giving more importance to this objective," he added.

69% of N-E children cut off from school: May 7 - Sixty-nine per cent of young children in camps for displaced in the north and east are cut off from formal school education according to a survey carried out by the UNICEF. The head of the UNICEF Kilinochchi office Penny Bung who carried out the survey said that there was a total of 22,418 children, 15,467 of whom were unable to attend school. She identified poverty as being a key reason for the children staying away from school. Being orphaned in the war, lack of proper care and the employment of children were given as reasons for the high non-attendance and drop-out rate.

UNICEF has proposed a dual plan of readmission and vocational training to deal with the problem. Children who have not attended school for less than two years will be readmitted to regular school and others who are beyond the school-going age will be given vocational training through centres set up in every district.

No third-party in trawler attack: May 7 - The Sri Lanka Navy's Board of Inquiry into the sinking of the Chinese trawler off Mullaitivu coast, has submitted its much awaited report to President Chandrika Kumaratunga. "Though there is no direct hard evidence, the circumstantial evidence points to LTTE being the perpetrator of the attack," the report says.

The Chinese fishing trawler, 'Fu-Yung-Yu 225' went down off the eastern coast on March 20, killing eighteen fishermen, when an alleged LTTE vessel attacked it.

The Navy report says "Considering the LTTE's involvement in such attacks in the past, the location of the attack and the fact that the LTTE is the only militant group capable of such attack, known fact that only LTTE Sea Tiger Wing contain male and female cadres... the Board is of the opinion that the LTTE is responsible for this attack and it has been deliberate". The Board of Inquiry is confident that the deed was done not by a "third party" as speculated by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM).

To prevent such incidents in the future, the Board of Inquiry has recommended among other measures, that no vessels be permitted to operate in high-risk areas, and that sufficient punitive action be taken against vessels that do not abide by these measures.

Relocation of HSZs premature: May 7 - President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge through her media spokesman said she was opposed to the relocation of Sri Lanka Army (SLA) camps from the present sites without reaching agreements with the LTTE on core issues. "President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge is of the view that the international community has no right to urge the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to resume peace talks with the Government of Sri Lanka until the LTTE recognizes the human rights of others," said presidential spokesman Mr.Harim Peiris addressing a press conference today. Relocation of SLA camps in the northeast without making concrete headway in the peace process would certainly endanger the security of the country, Mr.Harim Peiris said.

Akashi meets Pirapaharan: May 7 - Following talks between the leader of the LTTE Mr.V.Pirapaharan and the Japanese special peace envoy Mr.Yasushi Akashi, the Tamil Tigers told the Japanese peace special envoy Mr Yasushi Akashi that they would consider his request to participate at the Aid Donor conference in Japan seriously if the Government of Sri Lanka took positive steps towards implementing decisions taken at six previous rounds of talks. LTTE political advisor Mr.Anton Balasingham, LTTE political Head Mr.S.P.Thamilchelvan, Ms Adele Balasingham and Dr.Jay Maheswaran participated in the talks with Mr.Pirapaharan.

The Japanese delegation comprised of Japanese Special Envoy, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Japanese Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Mr. Seiichiro Otsuka, Regional Directors at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Takio Yamada and Mr. Ryousuke Kamono and Second Secretaries Mr. Koji Yagi and Mr. Masatomi Oikawa.

During the two and a half hours talks, the Japanese special peace envoy Mr. Akashi requested the LTTE leadership to resume peace talks with the GOSL and to attend Aid Donors' Conference scheduled to be held next month in Japan.

Mr. Balasingham said at a press briefing, "We are not running away from peace talks. We have given time and space to the government to come out with positive steps regarding the implementation of the decisions already arrived at several rounds of talks."

Norway delegation meets LTTE leaders: May 8 - Norwegian delegation comprising special envoy, Eric Solheim, Norway's ambassador to Sri Lanka, Mr. Hans Brattskar, Head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Tryggve Tellefsen, Second Secretary Tomas Stangeland and Advisor in the Foreing Ministry of Norway Ms Lisa Golden met with Mr. Anton Balasingham, Political Advisor of the LTTE, S.P. Thamilchelvan, Head of the LTTE political wing, Dr. Jay Maheswaran, LTTE commanders Col. Theepan, Col. Soosai, and Col. Banu this morning at the LTTE political head quarters in Kilinochchi.

Govt lodges strong protest: May 8 - Sri Lankan Government has lodged a strong protest over a series of killings allegedly by the LTTE of political leaders of some Tamil political parties and former intelligence operatives in violation of a truce.

The protest was conveyed through Norwegian peace facilitators, government spokesman and constitutional affairs minister GL Peiris said, adding that the authorities will deal with the perpetrators under normal criminal law. "The government has protested strongly about the assassinations," Peiris said. "Criminal law will be applied against those responsible for the killings in and around Colombo and the east (of the island)."

Tiger activity under CID scrutiny: May 8 - The government has been compelled to direct the CID to revive investigations into Tiger activity in Colombo subsequent to a spate of attacks on Tamil soldiers and informants in the east and Colombo, police said.

A senior policeman told journalists, "We were directed to probe the recent killings at Mount Lavinia and Dehiwela where Tiger hitmen shot dead two sol-

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diers. Investigators were able to establish the identity of the Tigers responsible for the slayings subsequent to the arrest of two undercover operatives in recent raids carried out by plainclothesmen. They were produced before the Colombo (south) Magistrate and were remanded."

Their arrest and the subsequent interrogation revealed that the Tigers have stepped up intelligence gathering work in the city taking advantage of lax security measures. Subsequent to the Ceasefire Agreement, police and the military ceased operations, particularly raids on suspected Tiger hideouts. The agreement prevents the government from carrying out search operations and arrests under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Instead arrests should be made in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code.

The officer said: "We are in the process of tracking down the Tigers wanted in connection with the slayings in Colombo. Investigators have moved to the north-east in a bid to capture them."

Five LTTE intelligence men in custody: May 9 - A team of Criminal Investigation Department officials have taken into custody five LTTE intelligence leaders on 7 May alleged to have supplied information to kill two army informers at Mt. Lavinia and Pepiliyana. The CID says that already three more suspects are remanded.

The LTTE chief intelligence man "Suri" has been arrested in Moratuwa, Soyzapura flats and "Gadaffi" in his Wellawatte house. The CID says that these two had supplied arms to kill army informers Kadirgamar Ragupathy and Lingarasa Devarasa to the LTTE pistol groups.

Police have also taken into custody the motor cycle and the three wheeler used to kill the army men. CID has received information that the LTTE supplied funds to purchase these two vehicles. The suspect "Suri" has worked as an electrical technician and "Gaddafi" as a three wheel driver while spying. The motor cycle has been bought for Rs. 65,000 at Nittambuwa and sold back for Rs. 45,000 after killing Ragupathy.

The CID has already received information about four members of the Tiger pistol gang who killed army informers. All of them have returned to Batticaloa which is their home town. The two informers "Suri" and "Gadaffi" had arrived in Colombo about five years ago from Batticaloa.

SLMM slams LTTE for killings: May 8 - The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission yesterday condemned the political killings as posing a threat to the cease-fire agreement in the country and observed that lack of proof did not rule out the fact that one of the parties could be responsible for the violence in the north and east.

"It is very clear that if one of the parties is responsible for threats, attacks or killings in Sri Lanka at this time, then that is a violation of the Cease-fire Agreement. SLMM would once again like to state that lack of proof does not rule out that one of the parties might in fact be responsible," the SLMM said.

"These criminal acts are direct attacks on the foundations and development of democracy and have no place in a civilized society," the report issued by the SLMM stated. The SLMM said that such acts spread a fear among the people, created political oppression and were definitely undermining the peace process when such acts appear to be done systematically. "The same goes for attacks and killings of people related to the government forces which appear to be systematically continuing in spite of the Cease-fire Agreement," the report stated.

The SLMM pointed out that complaints had been made by the government in addition to those by various political parties operating in the north and east in the wake of threats and attacks on their offices, individual members and their families and elected representatives. "In the majority of these cases the complainants have blamed members of the LTTE, a signatory to the CFA, for the attacks," the SLMM said. However, they noted that when the LTTE was confronted with these accusations they had denied any involvement.

"Ongoing SLMM inquiries have not yet led to the perpetrators of these crimes being identified. The police investigations rarely lead to accusations against LTTE and in the cases where witnesses have identified perpetrators as members of LTTE, the police seemed to have had difficulties in arresting them," the report said. Due to fear of repercussions the witnesses to crimes feared to come forward to give evidence, the SLMM added stating that this "seems to be an everyday concern for some people in the north and east."

"Any violence, whether systematic or spontaneous, creates fear, distrust and insecurity and therefore represents a serious threat to the stability of the Ceasefire. SLMM looks very seriously upon these attacks. They do not belong to the present time of peace building in Sri Lanka. Those who engage in such violence must realise that not only are they undermining their own integrity, the cease-fire and the peace process as a whole, but also the future of the people of Sri Lanka," SLMM chief Maj. Gen. Tryggve Tellefsen stated.

SLMM worried over civilian training: May 8 - The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission yesterday said they were keen to meet the LTTE in the wake of the recent complaints by both the army and police regarding the training of civilians by Tigers in eastern Sri Lanka in Mutur lately.

"Some of the Tamil areas around Mutur have been used by the LTTE to conduct training programmes for people to perform the duties of home guards," SLMM Head of the District (East) Jan Ledang told journalists adding that this was mainly with sticks being used for weapons and that "this is based solely on reports by police and army." He pointed out that this could "easily create problems" in the area. The Muttur area has lately witnessed violent incidents following the alleged abduction of certain Muslims by the LTTE. "At this time a military build-up or the use of force is not what's needed and we seek to get the Tamils and Muslims to have a dialogue on these matters," Ledang said.

Sewing machines war widows in NE: May 9 - The Social Welfare Ministry in Colombo has made arrangements to provide 125 sewing machines worth Rs.1.5 million to war widows and the women living in difficult circumstances in the North-East region, Social Welfare Ministry Secretary Ms. Viji Jegarasasingam said.

She said that the beneficiaries would be selected with the assistance of relevant Divisional Secretaries in those districts after careful screening procedures are followed. The Ministry has already provided 714 sewing machines to needy women living all over the country under the Ministry's special program to assist women-headed households and women and children living in difficult condition. So far the Ministry has provided 252 sewing machines to needy women this year, she added.

The sewing machines were provided by Latter-Day Saints Charities in Colombo 5 on a decision taken after a discussion between the Country Director of Latter-Day Saints Charities, Haynes Gearheart and the Social Welfare Ministry Secretary Ms. Viji Jegarasasingam.

16 EPRLF men abducted by LTTE: May 9 - The EPRLF, a non-LTTE Tamil political party, yesterday said that 16 of its cadres were abducted and some of them were killed by the Tigers in the Batticaloa district and in Colombo in separate incidents over a period of time.

The EPRLF identified the victims as

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Saverimutu Mathivathanan Selvanagar of Arayampathy; Arumugam Soundarajah, Sripala Building, Batticaloa; Anthony Clery, Thethavady Street, Arayampathy; Sivasambu Pulendrarajah 46, Lake Road, No. 2, Batticaloa; Sellathurai Thanga-rajah, Aerons Lane, Thandavanvely, Batticaloa; Nagarajah Nesarajah, Avuliya Lane, Batticaloa; Kandasamy Gnanasothy, Kadiragamar Road, Amirthakali, Batticaloa; Vijayanathan Vithyakaran, 142, Beach Road, Navatkudah, Batticaloa, Manchanthoduwai; Sellaiah Kandasamy, Thiruvalluvar Road, Pandiruppu; Poopalapillai Alaguthurai, Theevukadu, Mandur; Raju Suman, Kalkudah Road, Valaichenai; Seenithamby Ranjan, Thiruneetukerni; Marimuthu Rasalingam, 7th Division, Akkaraipattu, Chairman Alaiyadivembu Pradeshiya Sabha; Subramaniyam Jagathevan, Iruthayapuram East, Batticaloa; Ragupathy Karaitivu, Ampara District and Sithamparapillai Yasotharan, Puthur, Batticaloa.

Chandrika takes over Lottery Board: May 10 - President Chandrika Kumaratunge took over responsibility for the administration of the National Development Lottery Board that functioned under the Minister of Economic Reforms, Science and Technology Mr.Milinda Morogoda, a senior Minister in the United National Front (UNF) government.

The President issued an extra ordinary gazette notification with effect from midnight 8 May in regard to the take over, presidential secretariat said in a press release.

The President's action provoked an angry reaction from Prime Minister, Mr.Ranil Wickremasinghe, who promptly wrote a letter Friday to Ms.Kumaratunge expressing his dissatisfaction over the manner in which responsibility of administering the Lottery board was transferred from one of his senior ministers without consulting him. "I cannot agree to the change of a subject that comes under a minister without consulting me. Hence I request you to stop issuing a extra gazette notification giving effect to the change," the PM said in his letter.

Deadline for Donor Conference: May 10 -The Government and the LTTE would have to convey their decision concerning the participation at the June Donor Conference to the Japanese Government by May 14. The deadline set by the hosts was conveyed by visiting Japanese special envoy Yasushi Akashi to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in Colombo and the LTTE leaders during his visit to Kilinochchi on 7 May.

"Due to logistical reasons we must receive their response within a week from the day I discussed the matter with the parties concerned, that is May 7," Akashi told reporters at a special press briefing at the Colombo Hilton before his departure yesterday.

He said it would be a great opportunity lost for the country and its people if the donors meeting in Tokyo where a bigger portion of funds to rebuild the North East as well as the whole country is expected, had to be cancelled. "There would not be another opportunity like this for a long time to come," he said.

In response to a question whether there was any possibility of the conference being postponed the Japanese envoy said, "At this stage we have no intension to cancel or postpone this event which is indeed a major conference."

Sixty Governments and major international donor organisations are expected to participate at the conference scheduled on June 9 and 10.

Two LTTE cadres remanded: May 10 - Trincomalee Magistrate Mr. S.Thiagendran today ordered the remanding of till May 22 of two LTTE suspects who were produced on a report under Explosives and Weapons Ordinance by the Trincomalee Harbour Police.

Sri Lankan Navy on 8 May arrested three Tamil Tigers transporting explosives in a boat in the island's eastern seas near Trioncomalee. The navy stopped the boat off the coast of Trincomalee district and found 40 kilograms (88 pounds) of explosives and 14 claymore mines on board.

He said sailors sought the intervention of the Scandinavian team monitoring the truce to investigate the incident. However, following discussions between the LTTE leadership, the Defence Ministry and the SLLM, the boat and one man on board were freed while two other Tigers, Nagaratnam Prakash and Martin Romulco, were arrested and handed over to the Trincomalee Harbour Police.

The latest arrest came two days after security forces reported finding another boat packed with explosives in the island's war-torn northern peninsula of Jaffna. Security forces found the concealed boat following information from local residents in the Vadamarachchi sector of the peninsula, officials said.

LTTE should enhance its military power: May 11 - "The Liberation Tigers should enhance their military power. This is the only way to ensure our rights in this country. If war is thrust on us again, every Tamil, regardless of any differences, should join the ranks of the LTTE's armed forces. That is the only way for us to survive as a people," said Mr. Ariyanayaham Chandra Nehru, Tamil National Alliance MP for Amparai, speaking at a seminar on the future of the peace process, organised by the East Lanka Journalists' Association in Batticaloa town Saturday.

Speaking further the parliamentarian said: "The Sri Lankan government and the Sinhala chauvinist forces want to use the LTTE to get aid. That's all. Beyond that they are not prepared to give anything to reconstruct or develop our homeland. This is the reality today. Sinhala chauvinists who constantly berate the Tigers would have no scruples about spending the money that Colombo may get with LTTE's help in Japan. All of us should constantly bear in mind the fact that it was the strength of LTTE that brought about the current peace process".

"Even those Sinhala politicians who are inveterately opposed to the Tigers are scared to let them go back to war. There was no need for the Sri Lankan government to call Gen. Satish Nambiar. His report is one sided. It reflects only the concerns of the Sri Lanka army brass. We do not need such reports. There are better military experts in the LTTE if the Sri Lankan government wants advice," the MP said.

Balasingham leaves for London: May 11 - Political advisor and leader of the peace delegation for the LTTE, Mr. Anton Balasingham, is reported to have fallen ill in Kilinochchi and left for London for medical attention. Mr. Balasingham and his wife Adele Balasingham left Kilinochchi Public Grounds in a Sri Lanka Airforce (SLAF) helicopter. He is expected to fly to London from Katunayake. A Norwegian Embassy statement said that Mr. Balasingham had expressed a desire that his absence should not prevent scheduled meetings taking place. The Norwegian Embassy would therefore continue its planning for the meeting in Kilinochchi between Norwegian Foreign Minister, Jan Petersen and the leadership of the LTTE scheduled for Thursday 15 May.

Government's chief negotiator Minister G. L. Peiris had paid a courtesy call on Anton Balasingham at the Airport Garden Hotel before Balasingham left for London. The duo had talked for about half an hour, and Minister Peiris wished good health to Balasingham and hoped he would recover soon.

Talks depend on Government: May 12 – "We will regain hope for peace if the

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response from the Sri Lanka government to our letter is positive and constructive," said the Trincomalee district commander of the LTTE, Colonel Pathuman, at a passing out event held on 10 May at LTTE controlled Ralkuli village in Muttur division where certificates were awarded to a group of LTTE cadres who qualified as junior officers after arms training, sources said.

"We are disappointed over the peace talks which have been going on for the last fourteen months. Not a single rupee has been allocated for the rehabilitation of internally displaced by the government. Some critics say that the LTTE would derail the peace process and go for war once again. I say that choice between renewal of war and to continue with the present peace process is now in the hands of the government and not with the LTTE," said Colonel Pathuman.

Colonel Pathuman further said, "at this stage it is our duty to safeguard our people. No one can interfere in this aspect. The arms' training given to our cadres is to strengthen the security of our people and our military infrastructure."

Trincomalee district political head of the LTTE Mr.S.Thilak said, "we must maintain our military might. Then only we would be successful in reaching a solution that meets the aspirations of our people throught the present peace process."

"People would ask that while participating in the peace talks why we are giving arms training LTTE cadres. I would say that the present peace environment has dawned because of our military might. When we lose our military strength that will be the end of the peace process. Demonstration of our military strength is a key to sustain the peace process," said Mr.Tilak.

Pirapaharan felicitates Kumar's family: May 12 - Velupillai Pirapaharan, leader of the LTTE, awarded the "Maamanithar" medal to Yogaluxmi Ponnambalam, wife of late Kumar Ponnambalam, in honor of her husband in a special function held in Kilinochchi, on May 10. Late Kumar's son , Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, a lawyer and Tamil National Alliance (TNA)Parliamentarian, and daughter Mirnalini Ponnambalam, a physician, accompanied their mother to the function.

Kumar Ponnambalam, president of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen at Wellawatte, a Tamil suburb of the capital Colombo on 5 January 2000.

The LTTE bestowing the Most Eminent Person (Maamanithar) award on the 8 January 2000 said the award was for Mr. Ponnambalam's "dedicated patriotism and for his outstanding contribution to the cause of Tamil liberation".

Couple shot in Ampara: May 12 - Anthony Thevarajah (40) and his wife Francis Catherina of Sorikalmunai village near Kalmunai in Ampara district were injured when assailants fired at them around 9pm on 11 May. The couple were admitted to the Batticaloa teaching hospital and were undergoing surgery according to medical sources.

Thevarajah is from Kalmunai and was formerly a member of the Eelam People Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). He left for India in 1990 and returned back to Sri Lanka in 1995. Soon after he left the organization, got married in Sorikalmunai, and went to MiddleEast to work. On his return from Middle East he set up his residence in Sorikalmunai and has been cultivating his field.

The shooting incident occured when the couple was talking in front of their residence after Thevarajah returned from working in his field near the Central camp. EPRLF sources blamed the Tamil Tigers for the shooting incident.

Grenade attack on PLOTE cadre: May 13 - Eight PLOTE members were wounded when alleged LTTE cadre hurled a hand bomb at the PLOTE office in Batticaloa today, Batticaloa police said. The wounded were admitted to the Batticaloa hospital. The PLOTE members had been playing volleyball opposite the office in a small playground when the LTTE cadre had thrown the bomb. A senior local cadre of the group, Mr. Mylvaganam Niskanantharajah, was wounded seriously. The alleged LTTE attacker had arrived in a motorcycle. The injured were rushed to the Batticaloa hospital. The attackers got away. PLOTE has accused the LTTE of carrying out the attack.

Meanwhile, a security forces informant was knifed to death in Batticaloa the same day allegedly by the LTTE. In Vavuniya, a former member of the TELO was shot dead allegedly by the LTTE. These murders have been reported to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, police said.

Tamil journalist receives death threat: May 14 - The Sri Lanka Tamil Media Alliance (SLTMA) has brought to the notice of several world media organizations the death threat issued by an anonymous caller to a former president of SLMTA and senior journalist, Mr.V.Manikavasagam, and appealed for help in ensuring his safety, media sources said.

In an urgent letter to the Committee to Protect of Journalist (CPJ), Reporters of San Frontiers (RSF) and International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the SLTMA said a senior journalist Mr.Manickavasagam residing in Vavuniya received a death threat through a telephone call on 7th May.

A complaint has been made at the Vavuniya Police in this regard by Mr.Manickavasagam, according to the letter of the SLTMA, sources said.

Helicopter ride: May 14 - On a request by the SLMM the Sri Lanka Air force had airlifted three provincial LTTE leaders in the east in a helicopter to Wanni on 12 May, according press reports. The SLMM identified the three provincial LTTE leaders as Jeevendran, Kausaliyan in Batticaloa and Ampara and Tilak the provincial political leader in Trincomalee involved in talks with LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Air force Commander, Donald Perera in this connection said that the three LTTE provincial leaders were flown to Wanni in a bell 212 helicopter. The approval of the Defence Ministry also had been received in this connection.

EPDP's security strengthened: May 14 - The security at the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) office in Batticaloa district has been strengthened with effect from 13 May, said Batticaloa district EPDP leader, Paraneetharan Pratheepan. Number of Police officers in permanent security duty has been increased from 6 to 8, he added. Strengthening of security was a result of requests by his office to the Batticaloa Senior Police Commissioner and by the actions of EPDP leadership in Colombo bringing to the notice of the Security officials the urgent need to provide security to EPDP personnel in the light of continuing attacks by the LTTE, Pratheepan further said.

Bishops on constitutional crisis: May 14 - The Catholic Bishop Conference of Sri Lanka in a statement issued today expressed "profound disappointment" over the present political situation especially about the current standoff between Sri Lanka's Prime Minister and President over the latter's decision to take over a ministry amid objections and protests by the ruling party.

"The crisis is bound to disturb the present peace process which has already suffered a setback as the temporary withdrawal by the LTTE. Both leaders should forget their differences and work together to save the people of the country," said the statement.

The Catholic Bishop Conference ap-

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pealed to the President and Prime Minister, "The dignity of their office and the responsibility they shoulder should inspire them to give up petty party politics. The two leaders should work with great personal sacrifice towards the welfare of the people," the statement further said.

Norwegians in Colombo: May 15 - Norwegian Foreign Minister Mr. Jan Peterson accompanied by his deputy Mr. Vidar Helgessen arrived in Colombo yesterday to hold crucial talks with the leaders of the government and LTTE to in a bid to restart Sri Lanka's stalled peace talks. Japan and Norway are keen that the LTTE take part in crucial aid conference next month in Tokyo. The Tigers, however, say Colombo should first establish legally operable bodies and procedures to ensure a direct say for Tamils over the utilization of funds pledged by donors for reconstructing the war torn northeast.

Tigers in talks with Norwegians: May 15 - The LTTE would not participate in peace negotiations with the Sri Lankan government until Colombo implemented decisions taken at six rounds of talks since last year, Mr. Velupillai Pirapaharan, the leader of the LTTE told Norway's Foreign Minister Mr. Jan Peterson during a crucial meeting in Kilinochchi today. Col. Karuna and Col. Pathuman, the commanders of the LTTE's Southern Front Forces and the head of the political division Mr. S. P Thamilselvan were associated with Mr. Pirapaharan at the discussion with the Norwegian FM who was accompanied by his Deputy Vidar Helgesen and the country's ambassador in Colombo.

The discussions between the LTTE delegation and the Norwegian team led by Mr. Jan Peterson began around 11.30 a.m. and continued until 2.30 p.m. at the LTTE's peace secretariat in Kilinochchi. The Norwegian FM

The LTTE legal advisor Mr. V. Rudrakumaran and economic advisor Dr. Jay Maheswaran were also present at the meeting.

LTTE signature holds up reconstruction: May 15 - The North East Reconstruction Fund (NERF) agreement has been completed but cannot go through because the LTTE hasn't signed the document.

"The document has been sitting with World Bank officials in Colombo for the past five days," a senior government source said. "The officials are waiting for an opportunity to meet Thamilchelvan but the meeting has not been fixed as Thamilchelvan is evidently very busy in Kilinochchi."

Initially, the LTTE had complained strongly about a World Bank delay in finishing the NERF agreement. It was one of the main reasons cited by the LTTE for suspending peace talks, although they blamed the government - not the World Bank - for the slow progress.

The NERF agreement was finalised by the World Bank last week and endorsed by the government on Saturday 10 May. World Bank officials in Colombo then sought a meeting with Thamilchelvan with a view to securing his signature. However, the appointment has been slow in coming, the source explained.

World Bank is the custodian of NERF and is responsible for disbursing the money. Finalisation of the deal will permit the LTTE and government to use the fund for projects proposed by the Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (SIHRN).

Delay in completing the NERF document (due to certain legal difficulties arising from the LTTE's status as a non-government entity) had resulted in at least 15 SIHRN projects being stalled.

Peace cyclist in Batticaloa: May 16 - S. Kumar Soni (30), an Indian citizen from Gujarat, currently on a world cycle tour promoting peace, arrived in Batticaloa today, sources in Batticaloa said. Kumar has visited several villages and cities in the South of Sri Lanka and came to Batticaloa via Amparai. He is planning to resume his journey to Trincomalee. His stay in Sri Lanka is expected to last three months, Kumar said.

"I sincerely hope that people of this beautiful island will renounce violence and be able to enjoy the fruits of peace. All are members of the same family. I undertook this mission to promote peace in this country and all over the world," Kumar added. He started the cycle tour on 2 October 2001, and arrived in Sri Lanka end of last month after visiting Nepal and Bhutan.

Tamil Education Board opens: May 16 - The Jaffna district branch of the Thamileelam Educational Development Board (TEDB) was opened this morning at the Jaffna district zonal education office at an event presided over by Professor Shanmugathas of the University of Jaffna, who said that the opening of the TEDB branch was a timely step taken and it would give a boost to the educational development of the peninsula, sources said.

Mr. Mavai Senathirajah, the Tamil National Alliance Jaffna district parliamentarian, lit the flame of sacrifice and Mr.Semmanan, the Jaffna district deputy political head of the LTTE, hoisted the Thamileelam National flag. The flag of the TEDB was hoisted by the former Northeast provincial director of education, Mr.K. Kandasamy.

North East Provincial Education Ministry Secretary Mr.R.Thiagalingam and Provincial Director of Education Mr.S.Mahalingam also participated in the event.

Balraj to Singapore for treatment: May 16 – LTTE's Military Wing Leader, Colonel Balraj (Kandaiya Balasekeram) left for Singapore yesterday from the Katunayake international airport for urgent medical attention following a heart ailment. Balraj had, it is learnt, developed chest pains two weeks ago and was kept under observation in the north pending the preparation of his passport by the Immigration and Emigration Department, according to reports from Colombo. The LTTE military wing leader was brought to Colombo together with his doctor and accompanied by LTTE members Sudarshan and Sivakanthan. in an Air Force helicopter on Wednesday 14 May and housed at the Airport Garden Hotel prior to his departure for Singapore early Thursday morning at about 1.35 a.m. on Singapore Airlines flight SQ 401. Since the signing of the MoU between the Government and the LTTE, the LTTE had the opportunity to get medical facilities for their members in Colombo as well as in foreign countries.

The 38-year-old Balraj who suffered a heart attack had first sought the visa to go to Malaysia for medical treatment. However, permission was refused as the LTTE remains a banned outfit in Malaysia.

Trinco coal power project given up: May 17 - The Government has abandoned the proposal to construct a thermal coal power plant in Trincomalee following strong protests by environmentalists and the people of Trincomalee. The 300 megawatt plant is now planned for construction in Hambantota, deep south of the island, power and energy ministry sources said.

The Power and Energy minister Mr.Karu Jayasuriya visited Trincomalee a few months back and inspected a site close to the Trincomalee harbour to construct the proposed controversial thermal coal power plant. The government selected Trincomalee when the Catholic Bishop of Chilaw opposed the move to site the project at Nooraichcholai in the northwestern province.

An agitation against the project was launched by a group of leading citizens in Trincomalee led by human rights ac-

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tivist Attorney-at-law Mr.K.Sivapalan.

The Power and Energy Ministry has now decided to move the location to Hambantota and expects to solicit assistance from the private sector to build the plant.

LTTE cargo under proble: May 17 - The Customs is acting on the Attorney General's advice regarding the boxes of LTTE propaganda material seized on April 21 at the Peliyagoda container freight station, press reports in Colombo said. Director General S.A.C.S Jayathilake denied reports that he had been ordered to release the items and said they were handling the matter on the advice of the AG.

The container carried eight boxes of LTTE propaganda material, all destined to S.Sinnathurai of Kotahena from his son in Switzerland. The cargo which was described by the consignee as a gift from his son contained more than 4700 LTTE music CDs, 1100 audio cassettes, VCDs depicting battles between the LTTE and the Army, 13 jackets and caps, 133 sweaters with the LTTE emblem, 50,000 greeting cards, newspapers and Magazines. The Customs chief said the parties concerned had given contradictory statements and he was keeping the Defence Secretary informed of the developments. The Ministry of Defence along with the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB) are reportedly conducting parallel inquiries.

LTTE office escapes damage: May 17 - A grenade was thrown at the main entrance to the LTTE administrative office in Thamaraikerni in Batticaloa district today. The 15 year old, J.R type grenade, generally used by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA), failed to explode and no one was injured, security sources said. The LTTE office administrator, Veeravarman, said that he and another LTTE cadre were at the office when the grenade was thrown.

He added that the likely assailants are two persons, one belonging to Peoples Liberation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and the other from the Intelligence wing of the SLA, who were seen loitering near the LTTE office. Veeravarman further said that they have registered a complaint with the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) regarding the incident.

Call for unity between CBK, Ranil: May 17 - Ven. Rambukwelle Sri Vipassi, the Maha Nayake Thera of the Malwatte chapter yesterday called upon the President and the Prime Minister to work together for the sake of the country. Making a special statement from his official residence, the prelate said he was seriously concerned over the recent crisis that had emerged between President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe - apparently referring to the ongoing Constitutional crisis over the DLB issue. The Mahanayake said he hoped the two leaders would act in a manner that would not plunge the country into further crisis.

Japan's final appeal to LTTE: May 17 - Japan yesterday made a final urgent appeal to the LTTE to reverse a decision to boycott a donor conference next month in Tokyo. "The government of Japan ardently hopes that the LTTE will reconsider its position promptly so as not to miss the opportunity," a statement from the Japanese Embassy said.

Japan, which failed in face-to-face talks last week to convince the LTTE to attend, has said it will persist with the June 9-10 aid pledging conference, which had been expected to raise $3 billion in aid over three years.

"The conference is intended to prove a unique and precious opportunity in which the international community would express its unified and strong commitment to reconstruction and development of the entirety of Sri Lanka," the statement said.

India on Tokyo conference: May 17 – The Indian government has said it will not be represented at the donor conference in Japan next month if the LTTE also participates. The Indian government has already conveyed its decision asserting it cannot sit down with the banned organization to discuss aid for Sri Lanka. India maintains that it attended the donor conference in Washington D. C. recently because the LTTE had not been invited.

Denmark urges resumption of talks: May 17 - "Denmark is concerned over the suspension of the peace negotiations in Sri Lanka. We urge the LTTE to fully resume its participation in the peace talks and to commit itself to attending the Tokyo reconstruction conference. An early normalisation of living conditions in Sri Lanka will be dependent on the positive contributions of both parties," a press release from the Danish Embassy said.

"Denmark reiterates our commitment made in Oslo to support the peace process and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Denmark has pledged 1250 millions DKK (equivalent to approximately 2.2 billion (LKR) as grant assistance over the next three years. In addition soft loan financing of upto 450 millions DKK will be made available during the next two years. Several initiatives have already been started under this framework.

Denmark is now ready to release 1 million USD as a first trance to the North-East Reconstruction Fund (NERF) as soon as the LTTE is back in the peace process."

Dutch help for resettled families: May 18 - The Netherlands has come forward to grant livelihood assistance to the resettled families in the north and east. The Ambassador for the Netherlands in Sri Lanka, Ms. Susan Blankhart, last week inaugurated a scheme for granting livelihood assistance to resettled families in the eight districts of the North and East. The donation of school furniture also took place at Trincomalee, last week.

The government of the Netherlands has donated 2.7 million Euros to assist resettled families and improve the education of North-East students. Of this amount, 170 million rupees will be utilized for the payment of livelihood assistance to resettled families in the eight districts. Rs. 67 million will be spent on supplying furniture to schools in the region.

Shock for Barbers in Jaffna: May 18 - Barbers in Jaffna got a rude shock last week when the LTTE ordered them to close their shops on Wednesdays instead of Sundays, reports from Jaffna said.

The LTTE has ordered that barber saloons in Jaffna must close on Wednesdays and be kept open on Sundays. Any barber flouting this order would be fined Rs. 100. Meanwhile it is reported that the LTTE is collecting information on sports clubs and youth clubs in the Valikamam West and Sandilipay divisions in the Jaffna district.

Names of office bearers and members and details of finances available to the clubs, are said to be of importance. Parents of youths who are members of these clubs are disturbed about this activity of the LTTE and are advising their children to keep away from the clubs.

Army Seargent killed: May 19 - Kathirkamathamby Navasooriyam, 30, alias Soori, employed as a sergeant in the ninth battalion of the Sri Lanka army's National Guard (9 SLNG) was shot dead by unidentified an unidentified gunman in the eastern Batticaloa town on 19 May around 1 pm according to police sources. The victim was at a hairdresser's saloon in Puthur, a high security zone suburb of Batticaloa when he was killed.

German aid for Jaffna economy: May 19 - The state run the People's Bank has launched a programme to make ready cash available to entrepreneurs in the

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Northern Province with the assistance of German government-supported Rural Banking Innovations Project (RBIP), a press note by German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) said today. Speaking about the project, Mr. Sivapathaviruthayar, Regional Manager of the People's Bank Jaffna, said: "We all know what the entrepreneurs in Jaffna need most is money to set up their business"

People's Bank conducted a training workshop in May for the staff of the bank's Jaffna branch to sensitize them and to upgrade their capability to approach Jaffna. "This sort of training to our staff will enable them to mobilize more cash within the business community, which in turn will see a resurgence of economic activity in Jaffna," he added.

"The Rural Banking Innovations Project, a cooperation between the People's Bank of Sri Lanka and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) on behalf of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), was established in 1996 to support the Bank to re-orient itself towards commercial lending activities for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME)," according to the press note.

"The People's Bank, with the consultative support of the RBIP, will take the lead, in providing commercial credit facilities for start-ups, expansion of businesses and investments. This will help a lot of potential enterprises to set up their business," he said.

Girls escape from camp: May 20 - Three teenage girls aged 10, 12 and 14 who reportedly escaped from a LTTE training camp in Batticaloa sought the protection of the Security Forces after reaching Arunapura Army camp in Polonnaruwa, yesterday.

The girls identified as Sinnawan Gowri (10), Yogaraja Rohini (12) and Sumithra Gnanapalan (14) of Motharamulai Pulliar Kovil Street, Kiran in eastern Sri Lanka had been reportedly abducted by the LTTE 11 days previously while returning from school.

The girls had undergone two days military training at a LTTE camp located in an unidentified location. They have been handed over to Aralaganwila Police to be handed over to their parents after conducting further investigations.

TNA meets LTTE leadership: May 20 - A Tamil National Alliance delegation led by its parliamentary group leader, Mr.R.Sampanthan, T held discussion with the LTTE's political head, Mr.S.P.Thamilselvan, regarding the possibility of the resumption of peace talks with the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE.

After about two and a half hours of talks, Mr.Sampanthan told journalists that the LTTE would announce its stand on the question of resuming peace talks with the GOSL and participating in the Japanese aid summit at a press conference.

JVP seals pact with SLFP: May 20 - The JVP said yesterday it had finalised a memorandum of understanding with the SLFP in a bid to topple the UNF government. JVP propaganda Secretary Wimal Weerawansa said his party's central committee would ratify the deal on Friday 23 May while the SLFP is expected to do the same four days later.

Mr. Weerawansa declined to give details of the deal with the President, but said the agreement had plans to revive the nation. "We had a discussion at the President's house on Sunday (18 May) and we have reached a finality on most of the matters relating to the MOU but we are yet to reach a compromise over a new party symbol and a name for the new alliance," Mr. Weerawansa told journalists.

Killings in Batticaloa: May 21 - Kumaraperumal Perinpam (38), alias 'Master,' a former member of Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), was shot dead today by an unidentified gunman in the Batticaloa town. The PLOTE and police sources blamed the Tamil Tigers for the killing.

Security has been tightened in Batticaloa and security service personnel who conducted body searches of youths and examined the Identity Cards of people passing through the Clock Tower junction and other key junctions in the town.

Meanwhile, a civilian was wounded in a grenade attack at Adigar Road in the heart of Batticaloa town 7.20 p.m. The civilian, identified as Jerome was wounded in the explosion and was rushed to the Batticaloa hospital, Police sources said.

In another incident, another former PLOTE member was gunned down allegedly by the LTTE in Batticaloa tody. He had been identified as Kumar Perumal.

NE local polls: May 21 - The Government today tabled in parliament a Bill to amend Local Government Elections Special Provisions Act empowering the Commissioner General of Elections to call for fresh nominations to the fifty-three local government institutions in the Tamil dominated Northeast province.

Nominations were called last year to the fifty-three (three municipal councils, six urban councils and forty-four Pradesya Sabahs) local government institutions in the Northeast province along with other local authorities in the other parts of the country. However, at the request of the Tamil Mps representing the Northeast constituencies, the government postponed the elections for northeast local government bodies for June 25 this year. The government assured TNA at that time that elections to northeast local bodies would be held after calling fresh nominations.

SLMM demands LTTE release sailor: May 21 - The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in Trincomalee has confirmed that a sailor who was reported missing on May 13 is under LTTE custody at Koddawan LTTE camp after being arrested a few earlier.

Deputy Chief of the SLMM Hagrup Haukland told journalists that they have demanded the LTTE to release the sailor immediately after confirmation that he was under LTTE custody.

The LTTE has said that they have arrested the armed sailor while he was in their territory. Sailor I. P. A. K. Dharmadasa attached to Sri Lanka Navy, Horowpotana, was reported missing while on a training exercise at Palampattar, an area 13 kilometres South West of Trincomalee.

He was on his mission armed with his personal weapon - a T56, two T56 magazines and a rifle sling, Defence sources said. The Navy after their failure to trace the whereabouts of the sailor had informed the SLMM Trincomalee which confirmed that the sailor was in LTTE custody.

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Tigers seek tangible response: May 22 - "The Liberation Tigers will participate in the Tokyo aid summit scheduled for next month only if the Sri Lankan government response to our suggestions is concrete, trustworthy, honest and not based on verbal pledges regarding our proposal for the establishment of an interim administration in the northeast province" said Mr. S.P. Thamilselvan, head of the LTTE's political division, addressing a press conference today in Kilinochchi.

Mr. Thamilselvan said that Colombo should reach a definite agreement on setting up an interim administration for the northeast that can effectively handle rehabilitation and reconstruction before participating in the Tokyo donor summit next month. "The international community will realize that it is not possible to restore normalcy in the northeast without establishing an interim administration for the region", he added.

To another question by a journalist that there is no provision in Sri Lanka's constitution for setting up an interim administration, Mr. Thamilselvan replied: "We are least concerned about the snags and problems in Sri Lanka's constitution. The Sri Lankan government should think and take concrete steps to go beyond the parameters of the constitution to resolve the interim administration issue."

TNA briefs foreign envoys: May 22 - A delegation of the Tamil National Alliance told the American Ambassador for Sri Lanka Mr.Ashely Wills the urgency in setting up of an interim administration to rebuild the war ravaged northeast province and to rehabilitate the displaced families in their villages, TNA sources said.

The TNA appealed to the US Ambassador to exert pressure on the government to establish the interim administrative structure as requested by the LTTE leadership. TNA delegation comprised parliamentarians Mr. Joseph Pararaja-singham, Mr.N.Raviraj and Mr.G.G. Gajendrakumar, the sources said.

Body of LTTE cadre found: May 22 - The body of a member of the LTTE's political division in the Amparai district was found in a paddy field with gun shot wounds on 22 May. According to LTTE officials Mr. Poovannan was abducted by unidentified gunmen on the previous day from Karaithivu, 48 kilometres south of Batticaloa.

Farmers had found the body in a field called Pooraanvelivettai about four kilometres from Karaithivu this afternoon with hands tied behind the back and with gunshot wounds in the head, back and chest.

Former PS chairman wounded: May 22 - Unidentified gunmen today shot and wounded a former chairman of the Vaakarai Pradeshiya Sabha Mr.Samuel Pushparajah (40), , at Valaichenai, 32 km. north of Batticaloa.

Mr. Samuel, also known as Justine, is a member of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), a constituent party of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). He contested the local government election for the Vaakarai PS in 1994. Vakkarai is a town in the LTTE held area, about 64 km. north of Batticalaoa town.

Relief from North reach flood victims: May 23 - A convoy of trucks containing goods donated by various non-governmental and civil organisations from the North reached affected villages in the South yesterday. The trucks are delivering much needed emergency items to both Tamil and Sinhala villages affected by the recent floods.

A truck containing goods donated by the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) was one of a convoy of vehicles taking part in a two-day humanitarian relief operation. Items donated by TRO included bed rolls, blankets, roofing sheets, kitchen utensils and clothes. Officers from the organisation visited Kalutara yesterday to deliver urgently needed relief items to flood victims.

LTTE abducted cadre – EPDP: May 23 - The Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) claimed that one of their supporters had been abducted and assaulted by the LTTE on Wednesday 21 May. They claimed that Edward Charles (28) and his wife Vino had stepped out of their home to purchase essentials when they were set upon. "As soon as they had reached the boutique Kamsan and four other LTTE members appeared from the house of Sivagurunathan," they said. They alleged that Kamsan was in possession of a gun at the time and that the other LTTE members had been carrying knives.

"When Vino saw the LTTE members she ran back to her house and Kamsan who had chased after her had not been able to catch up with her," the EPDP said. They claimed that Vino's parents were the candidates for Uppuweli Pradeshiya Sabha in Trincomalee district.

However Charles was attacked by the other four LTTE members and been abducted in a three wheeler to an unknown destination, they alleged.

The incident had been reported to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission in Trincomalee and the Uppuweli police.

PA rejects interim administration: May 23 - Sri Lanka's main opposition People's Alliance (PA) today rejected the proposal for an interim council in the Northeast made by the LTTE, and warned that it would be forced to take constitutional remedies if Prime Minister Ranil Wikcremasinghe agreed to the LTTE's demand "contrary to" the Constitution.

The LTTE's proposal urged the government to establish an interim administrative structure in the Northeast with adequate powers to undertake Northeastern reconstruction and development activities.

Addressing a press briefing, the PA spokesman and former minister, Mr.Sarath Amunugama, said no one has the right to act beyond the limit of the present constitution. ❐

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Jaffna Hindu parents in Australia *seek partner for professional daughter, 26. Please send details with horoscope. M 1345 c/o Tamil Times.*

Tamil Christian parents *seek a religious Christian bride (Non-R.C), strictly under 26, for professional son, 29, British citizen. Please send details, full photograph. Confidentiality Assured.*
M 1346 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek professional groom for fair, attractive, graduate daughter, 29, British citizen in good employment, Mars afflicted. Please send horoscope, details.*
M 1347 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek professional partner for their pretty daughter, 25, educated and qualified in UK, currently employed as an accountant. Religion immaterial. Please send details.*
M 1348 c/o Tamil Times.

About People and Events

OBITUARIES

Mr. Sithamparapillai Thiruchelvam *beloved husband of Dhanapathy; loving father of Sharmini and Shanjeev; son of the late Udayar Mr. and Mrs. Sithamparapillai of Kachcheri Lane, Nallur, Jaffna passed away peacefully in London on 5th May 2003*

Friends and relatives paid their last respects at Merton Hall in Wimbledon, London SW19 on 11th May after which the cremation took place at the Putney Vale Crematorium, London SW 15.

The members of the family wish to thank all those who paid their last respects at Merton Hall, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and who attended the cremation. The family would also like to thank everyone for their support during the period of bereavement..

– 69 Toynbee Road, Wimbledon, London SW20 8SH. Tel: 020 8542 5140

Mrs Annamary Michael
Born: 3rd September 1907
Called to eternal peace: 21st April 2003
You are always in our thoughts And forever in our hearts

IN MEMORIAMS

In loving memory of ***Mr. Vellupillai Kumarasamy*** *on the fourth anniversary of his passing away on 20th April 1999. Fondly remembered and sadly missed by his beloved wife Sarojini; loving children Nirmala, Baskeran, Shyamala and Dayakaran; sons-in-law Rasalingam and Uthayakumaran; daughters-in-law Gnanamanohari and Sujatha; grandchildren Gayathiri, Gajan, Arjun, Shivani and Pooja, relatives and friends. – 24 Rowlands Avenue, Hatchend, Middx HA5 4BH/37 Mississippi Road, Seven Hills, NSW 2119, Australia.*

In loving memory of ***Mrs Ranjini Geetanjali Thirunavukarasu*** *on the seventh anniversary of her passing away on 24th May 1996.*
Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her husband Thirunavukarasu; children Poornima and Pradeep; father Mahalingam; mother-in-law Mrs P. Ponnuthurai; sisters Mrs Lalitha Dilkushi Karunakaran and Priyadarshini Damayanthy; brothers Premkumar, Mohankumar, Ranjitkumar, Nimalkumar and Tilakumar; brothers-in-law Karunakaran and Balanathan; sisters-in-law Kamalarani, Vijayalaxmi, Nirmala, Yasothara, Nalini, Kamaladevi and Sugirthadevi – M.Ranjitkumar, 12 Chase Lane, Barkingside, Essex IG6 1BH. Tel: 020 8554 2095.

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FORTHCOMINGS EVENTS

Jun 1 Sri Raja Rajeswary Amman Temple, Dell Lane, Stoneleigh, Surrey Annual festival commences with Kodi Eattam (Flag Hoisting Ceremony)
Jun 3 Sathurthi
Jun 5 Shashti; Feast of St. Boniface
Jun 6 Feast of St. Norbert
Jun 9 Feast of St. Ephrem
Jun 10 Sukkla Eekaathasi
Jun 11 Feast of St.Barnabas
Jun 12 Pirathosam; Vaikasi Visakam
Jun 13 Fullmoon
Jun 15 Sri Raja Rajeswary Amman Temple Ther (Chariot Festival)
Jun 16 Theertham (Water Cutting Ceremony)
Jun 17 Poongavanam; Sankadakara Sathurthi
Jun 18 Vairavar Madai
Jun 19 Feast of St. Romuald
Jun 24 Feast of the Birth of St. John Baptist
Jun 25 Eekaathasi
Jun 26 Karthigai; Pirathosam
Jun 27 Feast of St. Cyril of Alexandria
Jun 29 Amavaasai
Jun 30 Highgatehill Murugan Temple Annual Festival commences with Kodi Eattam (Flag Hoisting Ceremony)
At Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ.Tel: 020 7381 3086/4608. Website: www.bhavan.net
Jun 7 10.30 a.m.- 1 p.m. Dance Workshop by Shilpi Baruri. All welcome.
Jun 14 6.30 p.m. Bhinna Abhinna (Separate but One). Western Classical Music comes together with Karnatic Music providing an exotic music mix.
Jun 16 to 19 7 to 8 p.m. Lectures on Gita by Swami Parthasarathy. All welcome.
Jun 29 6.30 p.m. Violin & Veena Concert in aid of Sivabhoomi (Jaffna) Cancer Fund by R.Ganesh & Kumresh – Violin, K.Jeyanthi – Veena. For ticket Tel: 020 7386 0924/ 7381 3086.
Exhibitions from 12 noon to 8 p.m.
May 20 to Jun 3** Paintings/ Wall Hangings by Mridhu Dixit Jun 15 to 20 **Kusum Shukla's concept of the Purity of Soul is portrayed through colours.
***Jun 24 to 30** Portraits of the Aged by Baljit Balrow*
All Welcome

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate
the following couples
on their recent wedding.

***Aravinthan** son of Mr & Mrs P.Sivaji, 33 Kalyani Lane, Wattala, Sri Lanka and **Komathy** daughter of Mr & Mrs P.Gopalakrishnan of Egeparken 14, 7th , 5240 Odense N.O, Denmark on 18th May 2003 at Saraswathy Hall, Lorenz Road, Colombo 4, Sri Lanka.*

***Delesh** son of Dr. Jeyadevan & Swendrini of 52 Fuller Drive, Wistaston , Crewe, Che-shire, CW2 6 TH. and **Lohitha** daughter of Dr. Puvanarajan & Gnana of 51 Blenheim Avenue, Gants Hill, Ilford, IG2 6JQ on 25th May 2003 at The Pavilion, 324 Hoe Street, Walthamstow, London E17.*

Distinguished Gathering Cele-brate New Year

(L to R) Mr.Chris Naidu, Business Development Director for South East London, Royal Bank of Scotland; Mr. Sivas-ubramaniam, Director, Sales and Marketing, Link Air Travels; Mr. Mike Geerts, Regional Managing Director of Royal Bank of Scotland for South East England and Sri Lankan Cricket Hero, Aravinda De Silva)

The Mayor of Croydon; The Srilankan High Commissioner; The Srilankan cricketer Aravinda De Silva; Mr. Mike Geerts, Regional Managing Director, Royal Bank of Scotland for South East England were just some of the well-known faces seen at the celebrations of the Tamil and Sinhala New Year. More than 100 from the business community joined in the fun-filled evening at Rejez Restaurant, Norbury from 7 p.m. until 12 a.m on Monday the 14th of April.

The event was the first of its kind to have been held for the Srilankan community, both Tamil and Sinhalese in Croydon and was the brainchild of Link Air Travels, Mr. S. Sivasubramaniam. It was organised by the Royal Bank of Scotland and supported by Management House. Mr. Chris Naidu, the Business Development Director, Royal Bank of Scotland for South East London leading the evening's agenda, introduced the members of his team and their roles. He encouraged the guests to socialise and enjoy the Srilankan music and the cuisine.

The High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in UK, Mr. Faiz Musthaspha said that he was thrilled and impressed to see the unity of the Srilankan business community and praised their efforts and achievements. He was sure the same spirit would follow in projects to develop Sri Lanka. The Mayor, His Worship Councillor Stuart Collins said 'I thoroughly enjoyed meeting people from the Srilankan community and am a great fan of their culture. The food and entertainment were very impressive and the company excellent. It was lovely meeting the cricket legend Aravinda De Silva as I am a keen sportsman myself. The evening definitely gave me a taste of what to expect when I visit Sri Lanka next month.'

Mr. Sivasubramaniam said that he was pleased that the evening was a great success and everyone was able to build valuable business contacts with local businesses, the management of the Royal Bank of Scotland and enjoy the evening. He also thanked the Manager and Sales Manager of Srilankan Airlines, the Regional Manager of Qatar Airways, the Deputy High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in UK, the councillors of Croydon and the guests who graced the occasion.

Veena Performance Applauded

The London Veena Academy presented an orchestral programme in the Youth Music Festival held in Waterloo, London and won special applause from the audience. The performers and the conductor Sangeetha Vidwan Smt. Sivatharani Sahadevan were congratulated by the Chief Guest, Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke, M. P., Secretary of State for Education (who is at the centre of the picture above), for the very high standard of the performance. The performers included Miss Sindhu and Madura Yogarajan (students of Smt Sivatharani Sahadevan) on the Veena, Sri. Parthipan Nagarajah (student of Sri. K.T.Sivaganesh) on the Violin, Mas. Thivian Thayaparan on the Miruthangam, Mas. Abiram Sahadevan (student of Sri Balachander) on Genjeera and Mas. Aathavan Thirunavukarasu (student of Smt. Kamala Pathmanathan) on the Flute.

Miss Yalini Sucindran (student of Smt. Selvaluxmy Ramakrishnan) gave an excellent performance of Bharatha Natyam, which was highly appreciated by the audience and the Chief Guest.

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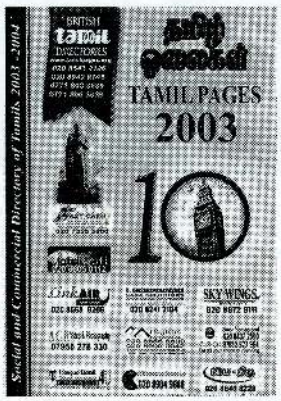
Book Review

Tamil Pages 2003: An Unparalleled Cultural Icon

The Brief

Tamil pages (Tamil Olaikal) – a compendium of the cultural, social, commercial and economic achievements of the Tamils in Great Britain and Europe has come up with its tenth anniversary issue published on 14th April this year – the Tamil New Year – following a decade of uninterrupted publication.



During this ten-year period, this directory has grown in stature along with the endeavours and achievements of the Tamil community in Great Britain and Europe, and now has become a household name. No Tamil home, institution or business establishment functions without this invaluable companion, an easy reference guide to our everyday activities.

Starting as a small handbook ten years ago, this has grown from strength to strength in terms of information, quality, size and circulation and currently boasts more than three thousand entries in its six hundred odd pages.

This compendium serves several purposes. Apart from being a reference manual it has successfully linked up the public with the business community; has been a media to intercommunicate with each other; and has brought together the Tamils of many different persuasions, scattered all over the globe.

Above all, this serves as a record of the activities of the Tamils who migrated from Eelam and settled all over Europe and the United Kingdom during the last two decades of the Twentieth Century; and will prove to be an invaluable tract to the student of future social history.

The Survey

A perusal of its pages demonstrate to anyone that the Tamil community in this country are a bold, energetic, vibrant and enterprising lot who contribute enormously to the growth of the British economy – their contribution markedly outweighing its population levels.

Out of the 3.7 million businesses in the UK over 250,000 are owned by the ethnic minorities, Asian businesses accounting for about 150,000 business units. And these entrepreneurs contribute over £13 million annually to the British economy. The British Government does recognize the enormity of our contribution to society and this country.

The Prime Movers

Tamil Pages, the brainchild of two young professionals – Messers. T. Srikantha-Rajah and A. Gnanendran remains a symbol of the untiring and persistent efforts of these two over the past decade. The efforts, application, dedication and commitment of the editors and their team deserve the acclaim and the accolade of the entire Tamil community.

The Product

The main codex of this directory is arranged in the standard alphabetical order – commencing with "Accountants" and ending in "Wedding Services". The European pages takes pride-of-place at the beginning, and the Advertisers index set at the very end. The entire book bristles with information; belches a myriad of brilliant colours; displays an elegant format and lavish layout; imprints imposing types set on glossy paper; and parades a multitude of womenfolk in their marvellous attires – a marvel to behold!

And all this for free!

The Publishers:

British Tamil Directories, 52 Kingsley Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8HF,U.K.
E-mail: editor@tamilpages.com Tel: 020 8543 2126 Fax: 020 8540 3442.

By Dr. S. Thiagarajah

Tamil Performing Arts Society Silver Jubilee Drama Festival

A Review by Professor Kopan Mahadeva

The above festival was held recently and my wife and I were two of its committed viewers. There were some 200 others from the Tamil media and social groups including a few who had flown from the continent for this special occasion. The hall used was Waltham Forest's Lloyds Park Theatre, with what I consider to be limited lighting and stage facilities.

The show started a little later than the announced time. Three of the Society's best plays of the past had been carefully selected for the Festival, but I was viewing each for the first time and was resolved to mentally mop up all the salient features and details with no pen and paper. My objective was to enjoy the evening while getting a snap-shot view of the developed art of Tamil drama in the United Kingdom over the past 25 years from this consistently dedicated group led by playwright-director K. Balendra and his actor-wife Anandarani, with their ardent, loyal cast.

*The first on stage was **Kaaththirppu** ('The Wait') featuring Anandarani, K. Krishnarajah, S. Vasuthevan, V. Sivasuthan and S. Sanjeevraj. The play depicts the anxieties and hopes of a mother (Anandarani) who had suddenly lost sight of a grown-up son during the racial conflict in Sri Lanka in the late 1970s. He was one of the several Tamil youths, mostly males, who thus went mysteriously missing from their homes, allegedly taken by the government forces for 'questioning' or had joined one or another of the armed resistance groups which evolved among Tamils of the North and East to try and liberate their kith and kin from race-biased governments. All the actors did their parts quite well in this short play, which was convincing and effective.*

*Next came **Kannaadi Vaarppukal** ('Glass Figurines'). This was a long, socio-psychological play with four characters, said to have been first staged in 1978 with a rousing welcome. The actors were Anandarani, Dharshini Ganeshapillai, S. Vasuthevan and V. Sivasuthan. On that day, as seen, I felt (and some other viewers also remarked about it) that this play appeared too long and rather monotonous in parts, particularly in the scene where love was struggling to grow between psychologically affected daughter and the family's young guest Ramesh.*

*The third and final play was a comedy called **Verukkul Peyyum Mazlai** (The Rain Within the Root). The script was by Chelziyan from Canada. There was so much of laughter, giggling and applause from the audience that the toddlers and infants who had accompanied some young families, and who were either sleeping in mothers' laps or were dozing off, suddenly woke up after ten o'clock and rather vociferously started competing for attention. Of the three, this was in deed the play I enjoyed best, perhaps of the new-blood contributions of the actors P.Sathiyendran and Charitha Annathurai, but more probably because the setting was modern and more lifelike, and because the artists themselves were seen to enjoy themselves while playing their well-knit parts. The older characters were played by Anandarani and S.Vasuthevan who, again, in my opinion, gave their very best performances in this piece, having warmed up to easy-flowing and relaxed states during their difficult and substantial roles in the first two plays. This was to me theatre at its best, dazzling with universality, and I felt rewarded for the seven hours and twenty pounds or so I spent that*

(continued on next page)

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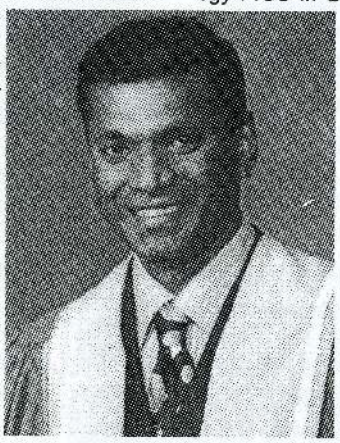
In Cherished Memory of Dr. Shan Visvalingam



Dr. Shan was born in Kurunegala on the 5th of October 1963, where his father Dr. Philip Visvalingam was a private Medical Practitioner and his mother on the tutorial staff of Maliyadeva College. He was a student of St. Thomas College Mount Lavinia, where he won many prizes, was in the choir and the junior Cricket Team. He obtained distinctions in all the subjects at the GCE O/L. He then joined St. John's College Jaffna and excelled in studies and sports and was awarded the Gold Medal for general excellence and best student in 1981.

He followed his father's footsteps into Medicine and entered Christian Medical College Vellore 1983-1987. He won the Edward Gault Prize for research in Pathology, The Dr. Benjamin Prize for Community Medicine, The Dr. Ida Scudder Prize for the best paper on Medical Care of the sick and suffering and the All India competition on Geriatric Medicine Prize. He won Gold, Silver and Bronze every year for athletics, track and field events, Hostel Union games and was awarded the Reeves Belts Gold Medal as the best Sportsman in the Final Year.

On his return to Sri Lanka, he was Resident Medical Officer at the Green Memorial Hospital, Manipay and then worked at Base Hospital Polonnaruwa and at Delmon Hospital Colombo. He obtained "A" grade in Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynaecology in the Australian Medical Examination and migrated to Australia in 1992. He was Resident Medical Officer at the Wooden Valley Hospital, Canberra.

The wedding of Shan and Prianthi daughter of Dr. S.J. and Dr. (Mrs.) Benita Stephen was celebrated in Colombo in January 1994. He worked as Senior Resident Medical Officer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Westmead Hospital Sydney and obtained the MRANZCOG in 1998 and the FRANZCOG in 2001. He was elected Fellow of the International College of Surgeons in Obstetrics and Gynaecology-FICS in 2001. He moved to Royal North Shore Hospital Sydney as Research Fellow, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in 2000 and Consultant in 2002. He was also Consultant for other leading hospitals in Sydney, with very successful private practice as a top Obstetrician and Gynaecologist.

He was actively involved in Research and won prizes in 1998 and 1999 and the prestigious Crown gold medal for the best research paper and the Register presentation at the RANZCOG Annual Sessions held in October 2000. He was invited to lecture at the Scientific Sessions and International Conferences. He was a guest speaker at the 50th Annual Sessions of the American College of obstetricians and gynaecologists in Chicago USA, Medical Conference in Indianapolis USA, Women Health and Menopause-4th International Symposium in Washington D.C., Asia-Pacific Menopause Federation in Seoul South Korea, guest lecturer at the World Menopause Conference in Berlin and Geneva and Investigators Sessions in Athens in 2001.

Dr Hugh Torode and Shan conducted a Laproscopic workshop at the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Society of Sri Lanka in Colombo in June 2002 which was highly commended and his excellent speech greatly appreciated. Some of these Medical talks were recorded on cassettes and a number of his research articles published in various Medical Journals. He was appointed a Member of the NSW State Committee of RANZCOG and later the Chairman of the Education Sub Committee. He was Examiner in obstetrics and gynaecology for the Australian Medical Council, visiting lecturer to Sydney University Medical Students at the Royal North Shore Hospital and was involved in the Training programmes of the overseas Doctors at Liverpool, Campbell Town and Black Town Hospitals. At the Sydney Olympic games he served as a volunteer Medical Officer. His special interests were computers and its role as a visual aid for presentations and research on ageless education at the time of his tragic death. Within ten years, 1992 to 2002, he reached the Acme of his profession and career and was loved and respected by all.

Such a devoted and dedicated Obstetrician and Gynaecologist lost his life suddenly in a car accident at Waroonga, Sydney on 20th December at the prime of his life and the peak of his illustrious Medical career, leaving behind his beloved wife Prianthi, seven year old son Arwin, five year old Anjali and a year old Anika to bemoan this terrible loss. May the Lord comfort and sustain them always. His mother, brothers and sisters, Prianthi's parents and brother too are shocked and saddened. In our deepest sorrow God's grace uphold His peace and His love sustains us. Being a dedicated and caring Doctor he had signed to donate his organs to others who were desperately in need and gave eight of them a second chance to live healthy lives.

To win the respect of people
To earn the appreciation of honest critics,
To appreciate beauty, find the best in others
To leave this world better, radiating joy and love
To know that others have benefited greatly because you have lived
This is to succeed.

(Continued from page 40)

evening, including for travel.

Tamil Performing Arts Society is essentially an amateur theatre group founded by the Balendras and has so far staged over 50 different plays in some 200 venues mostly in London but also in faraway venues such as in Sri Lanka, Canada, Norway, Australia, Holland, and Switzerland. They have also organised successful drama workshops and seminars. May their contributions continue.

Sri Raja Rajeswary Amman Temple

Annual Festival Programme

The Annual Festival of the Sri Raja Rajeswary Amman Temple, Dell Lane, Stoneleigh, Surrey, UK commences on Sunday, 1st June 2003 with the Koddietram (Flag Hoisting Ceremony), continues for 15 days with the **Ther** (Chariot Festival) on Sunday, 15th June. The Ther procession will commence at 10 a.m. and Ambal will return to the temple at 2 p.m.. **Theertham** (Water Cutting Ceremony) will be on Monday, 16th June; **Poongavanam** on Tuesday, 17th June and **Vairavar Madai** on Wedn-esday, 18th June.

During the festival Miss. Ds. Mangaiyarkarasi. , renowned lecturer from Tamil Nadu, India will conduct religious discourses from 7.30 p.m. to 8.15 p.m.

May Sri Raja Rajeswari Amman shower her choicest blessings on all her devotees.

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